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*A FATAL RESERVATION.*

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CHAPTER IV.

A sect whose chief devotion lies  
In odd perverse antipathies;  
In falling out with that or this,  
And finding somewhat still amiss.

'THERE is very little in the paper,' said Waveney at breakfast one morning, a few days after he had come down from Oxford for his second long vacation. 'Here is a leading article which suggests that Messrs. Pott and Slurk are not so extinct as they are supposed to be; and a criticism of a play—an adapted French play—in which the authors seem to have held the mirror up to nature at not quite the right angle for Mrs. Grundy; and a letter from a dignitary of the Church complaining—well, I think one may say, of things in general; the question of the Sunday opening of museums is the pretext for the letter, but, apparently, it is the Spirit of the Age that especially distresses the good gentleman.'

'I think the Spirit of the Age must distress any one for whom life is something more than a succession of amusements,' said Mrs. Fry, gravely.

'Oh, surely, few of us are so bad as that. The Spirit of the Age is a very serious spirit; nearly every one you meet is devoted to a Question. A little philanthropy is *de rigueur*.'

Mrs. Fry changed her position uneasily, which was a sign of her being annoyed. The lightest pleasantries from near relations—with strangers she could show herself agreeably tolerant—

provoked her repressive spirit. 'Yes,' she said, 'I am afraid a great deal of the philanthropy of the age is merely fashion.'

'Let us be thankful for it,' said Sir George, 'fashion or no fashion. It doesn't do to consider motives too curiously.'

'I think you are wrong, George. It is the motive which is of supreme importance.'

'Well, it may be. But human nature being what it is, I am always thankful when people are content to amuse themselves with anything so innocent as a charity concert.'

'I should like to see that play,' said Waveney, in an aside. 'It must be very ingenuous.'

'To amuse oneself under the pretence of doing good, to make religion a cloak for amusement, is wretched hypocrisy,' insisted Mrs. Fry. 'If life has no significance, no deeper meaning for people, I have more respect for them when they frankly say so.'

'Ah, *il faut glisser la vie et non l'appuyer*,' smiled Sir George, good-humouredly; but, being a little tired of the subject, he turned to Waveney, and asked, 'Is there anything else in the paper? It is too soon, I know, to ask about that momentous list.'

'Yes, it won't be out just yet. They have not got very far with the *vivas*. No, I don't see much else in the paper. There is the reported escape of a convict from Dartmoor.'

'What is that?' asked Sir George.

'Oh, there are very few particulars given. They are sure to get him again. No one ever gets clear away from one of those places.'

'Do you mind letting me look for a moment, Waveney?'

'Here it is, sir; just by my finger,' said Waveney, handing his father the paper. His interest in the matter surprised him.

Sir George read the little paragraph and then handed the paper back to his son. It was two or three minutes before he returned to his breakfast. He looked absently out of the window, appearing to be lost in thought. How the report of some wretched man's escape from a convict establishment could be of interest to his father, Waveney was at a loss to conceive.

It was the morning of Waveney's twenty-first birthday. For some days the house had been the scene of the busiest preparation. The carpet in the dining-room had been taken up, and the floor prepared for the dance that was to be given in the evening. The halls, both the outer and the inner, were to be lighted in an unexpected and ingenious way, and decorated with arrangements of flags and flowers. The cook had risen early, and had had no

rest for several days, in her endeavours to provide adequately for the appetites of the farmers who were to taste the Court's hospitality on this important occasion. Mrs. Hope had not had so much to think of since Sir George's wedding-day, and as for Edwards—any one who had not known the worthy butler would have been alarmed at the terrible stolidity his face assumed. Mrs. Fry had temporarily given up the management of things to her niece, and was spending her time in the drawing-room, busier than ever with the accounts of her various clubs. This room and Sir George's study were the only places in the house where quiet was still to be obtained. The latter was a small room on the western side of the house, opening through a glass door on to the end of the terrace. One of the shrubby walks terminated just in front of it.

Punctually at one the tenants assembled in the tent that had been erected in the grounds for the occasion. Sir George took his place at one end of the long table, and opposite to him, at the other end, was Waveney. Between them was a generous array of roast beef, shoulders of mutton, innumerable pies, tarts, puddings, custards, salads, cucumbers, &c. &c., the usual array of robust and trust-worthy delicacies to be found at festive gatherings of the kind.

'And they stretched forth their hands to the viands lying before them,' while Edwards and his staff girded themselves for the service. Dinner was a reality with these excellent men. The joints visibly diminished; chickens and ducks were reduced to skeletons; pies and tarts were emptied to the crockery; salads and cucumbers ceased to be. Edwards looked on with just the slightest tinge of contempt mingled with the purple stolidity of his countenance. He was too good a servant not to feel some contempt for men who showed this indifference to the subtle conventions to which he was accustomed.

Then came the speeches. The largest farmer was also the oldest tenant, and to him fell the task of proposing Waveney's health. The old man was very quiet until his time came, and then amidst a general murmur of satisfaction, followed by profound silence, he got upon his legs and began. It was no studied oration. What he said came from his heart, and from a heart that was full. His memory carried him back to the days of Sir George's boyhood. It was in one of his father's fields that the baronet had taken his first hedge, 'and very prettily he did it too.' It seemed to the old man but as yesterday that he had been present on a similar occasion to drink Sir George's health, 'when he was a fine young gentleman

like what Mr. Waveney is now.' He had had his farm 'turned thirty years and his father before him,' and had never had cause to complain of his landlord in anything: a better was not to be found in the county. As for Waveney, he knew he was speaking for the rest when he said that they were 'downright proud of him.' When he drew to a close something very like tears might have been seen in the old man's eyes. He ended by saying, 'We have had Mr. Waveney amongst us ever since he was a little chap as could only just walk, and we have never had cause to think differently of him. It's our opinion he is going to make as good a gentleman and landlord as his father and grandfather have been before him; and we can't say more than that. Mr. Waveney, sir, your health.'

Waveney rose to reply, smiling, confident, gracefully at his ease. He spoke naturally and without hesitation. He had been thinking of his little speech all the morning, but delivered it as if what he said had only just occurred to him. He thanked them for the friendly way in which they had drunk his health. If he deserved only half the good things that had been said of him, he felt that a serious responsibility would be his in endeavouring to act up to their good opinion. He could not help feeling proud when he heard the terms in which his father and grandfather had been alluded to; it would be the earnest wish of his life to follow in their footprints. He need not remind them how much England had always owed to her farmers—how in the old days they had made the stoutest soldiers in her armies, and had won for her her position amongst the nations of the earth. He knew there were clouds in the sky, but he trusted these were still days when

*If some were for a party,  
Still most were for the state;*

and he pointed out that the true strength of England lay in the happy union of all classes. In conclusion, he hoped that it might be many a long year before he was called upon to put his promises into execution, but if ever he did sit at the other end of the table, he trusted he might hear his successor at his as kindly and well spoken of as he had been that day.

His speech was received with great enthusiasm, and the draughts that were drunk in his honour tended to show that no want of novelty had been felt by his hearers. Edwards's feelings were too much for him. He forgot for one moment the dignity of his position, and fairly joined in the cheers of the company. The astonish-



ment on the face of one of the footmen at this exhibition recalled him to himself, and he at once left the tent to indulge his feelings where no curious eye might look. This was one of the happiest days in the good old fellow's life. He felt himself a boy again, and was beginning to think he might make it fifty when Sir George should have him into the library to meet the questions of the census. He settled the point in his own favour before the day's festivities were ended, and had even begun to look wistfully towards forty-nine . . . . But we are anticipating.

Sir George should have been a happy man that day. Never had he received clearer testimony to the respect and affection in which he was held by his people; and for him respect and affection had a value. Waveney had never appeared to greater advantage. There was no one, from old Godwin, who had proposed his health, to young Joe Smith, whose father had put him into the Cherry Tree Farm but a month or two before, to whom he did not manage to say something appropriate. He laughed at their stories; sympathised with their grievances; accepted their forecasts of the weather; and did generally all that was becoming in a young gentleman of his advantages, natural and acquired.

Still, if the truth be told, Sir George's feelings were of a mixed nature. Festive occasions are seldom times of the greatest rejoicing; anniversaries are usually trying for the spirits. Sir George's thoughts did him the ill turn of straying back into the past, and drawing a picture of what this occasion might have been if some who were gone had been there to see it. His thoughts returned especially to Waveney's mother.

When the tenants had drunk the last healths and were gone, he wandered back alone to the house. It was late in the afternoon. The sun had gone in, and a depressing greyness had stolen into the summer light. An insidious chill had passed into the air, the cold breeze which blew over the park seeming already to come charged with the dews and dampness of the evening.

When Sir George reached the house, there was a moment of temporary lull in the preparations, and the halls with their flowers and ingenious adornments looked mockingly empty and deserted. He went to his study; but only to discover that he was too indifferent company for himself to make it desirable to remain there. He thought he would look for Waveney, and was on the point of leaving the room when he fancied he heard a footstep on the gravel outside. He turned round, and was surprised to see a

stranger cross the terrace from the shrubbery walk that terminated in front of the window. The glass doors were open, and the man walked straight into the room.

Sir George at once turned back to meet him.

The stranger stood for a moment holding with both hands the back of a chair that happened to be near the window. He was a man of about fifty, tall, massively built, with heavy beard and whiskers. His face, which was tanned and rough, bore witness to a hard life and exposure: it was the face of a man to whom the lot must have fallen in desert places. He had, perhaps, once been handsome; his features were strong and regular, and his eyes were bright; but there had been that in his life which had brought the furrows into his forehead, hardened the lines of a mouth always firm, and made the expression of his eyes almost repellent in its resolution.

He was fairly well dressed, and, in spite of his tanned face and large rough hands, had the air of a gentleman. His dusty boots, and the perspiration which stood upon his forehead, suggested fast walking in the heat of dusty lanes.

For some moments he kept his eyes fixed upon Sir George without speaking. He was scanning him intently, as if he were comparing the actual man with some description to make sure that he had the person he sought before him. Then, as if satisfied with his inspection, he said in a low tone—

‘Excuse my coming to you here. I wish to speak to you alone.’

‘Won’t you take a seat?’—and somehow there was a tremor in Sir George’s voice which he was not able to hide.

‘You must excuse my coming to you in this irregular manner,’ he continued, without noticing Sir George’s invitation. ‘To tell the truth, I do not want any one to see me. We are not likely to be disturbed?’

‘No; what can I do for you?’

‘Perhaps you had better first know who I am. I did not expect you would recognise me. Time has changed you, and I have had misfortune as well as time to change me.’

Sir George’s face had paled, and the hand that rested on the chimney-piece was trembling perceptibly.

‘This disguise, too, has proved effectual. I fancy one or two people who should know me pretty well have failed to recognise me. Even without it, seventeen years are a long time, and——’

'Good God ! it is not you, Richard —— ?'

'Yes, your brother-in-law, Richard Leigh.'

Sir George fell back a pace, and seized a chair to steady himself.

'Have they released you?' he asked, in a voice trembling beyond his power to control it.

'No, George ; I have escaped,' he answered, almost in a whisper. 'And before we go farther, let me lock the door. I must not be seen here.'

He crossed the room as he spoke, turned the key in the lock, and returned to his place by the window.

'If any one comes, I shall have time to hide in the shrubbery,' he said.

'You escaped yesterday morning?' Sir George inquired.

'You saw it in the paper?'

'Yes. A kind of presentiment seems to have been with me all day. I was thinking of you only a few minutes ago. But how did you manage it? Are they not after you?'

'After me? They are hunting me as you hunt a fox. The police all over England are after me. They will come here after me ;—but not till I have gone.'

'How did you manage it?'

'To get away from Dartmoor?'

'Yes.'

'By bribery.'

'How?'

Leigh looked suspiciously round, and then going close to Sir George, laid his hand upon his arm, and said in a low grating voice which was hardly above a whisper—

'I will tell you. First, I made friends with one of the warders. Without him I could not have done it. You don't live with the kind of men I have been living with without learning some of their ways. I learnt, amongst other things, how to get the right side of a warder. I watched this man for weeks and months. He was less exacting than most of them ; we liked him—he was indulgent to us ; for my part, I managed to get even more out of him than the others. When he had been with us some time I discovered—I had been watching him, as I say, for weeks—that he was in some sort of trouble. He became not only indulgent, but even careless and negligent, and as a natural consequence had got into trouble with the governor. One day I was left alone with him, and learnt a

little how matters stood. It appeared that he had a wife and two children, having just lost his youngest little girl in consumption; and his wife was following on the same road. The damp and fog of Dartmoor were killing them. He had no money except his wages; his wife was too ill to work; his eldest boy was only twelve. He was afraid to give up his situation, and if he stayed on he was likely to see his wife too die before his eyes.

‘I did not learn this all at once, but little by little. The more I saw of him, the more I thought it possible to get him to help me. I threw out the bait to him cautiously. His troubles had increased; his wife was worse; he was still in disgrace with the governor. I offered him 500*l.* to help me. He accepted my offer. Then we laid our plans. I belonged to a gang of farm labourers. We were the only gang that had outdoor work to do before breakfast, and it was often misty when we first went out. Escaping is not an easy business; but if any one has a chance, it is one of the gang I belonged to. The difficulty is to get any distance before they know you are gone. You must have help outside. Well, our plan was this: that I should make off in the mist, if I got the chance, and steer straight for Johnson’s cottage, and stay concealed there till I could use the disguise which a convict, who had been discharged, had promised to send us, and Johnson could show me the way to Tavistock, where I might take the train to Exeter and London.

‘Day after day went by, and the opportunity I was waiting for did not come. My discharged friend kept his word and sent Johnson the disguise, but fortune was not favourable in other respects. The mornings lately have been fine and clear, much too clear for my purpose; and, besides, I got no opportunity of evading the warder in charge of us. The night before last, however, there was a halo round the moon. It might be foggy in the morning, or it might rain. If the fog should be very dense, the gangs would not go out. I lay down too anxious to sleep, Heaven knows! but I prayed that it might be my last night within those walls.’

As he proceeded with his narrative, Leigh’s face gradually softened. His voice lost something of its harshness, and there was a tremulous eagerness in his manner which showed that he was living vividly through the scene as he described it.

‘As the sun rose, I fell into a light sleep, and only woke when the prison bell sounded at half-past five. The first thing I did

was to look out of my window to see what the morning was like. There was a mist, thick enough for my purpose, but not so thick as to prevent our going out. Having washed and dressed, and rolled up my hammock, and done my share of cleaning the room, I fell into my place in the gang, and we were marched out. I could feel my heart beating against my ribs. The time had come; the morning was favourable; should I get my opportunity? We reached the outhouses where the horses are stabled, and broke off to our work.

‘In one of the yards is a large mound of rubbish which extends to the wall of a cow-house. Between this and the outer wall is a narrow passage partially blocked with rubbish of all kinds. If once I could gain this passage, under shelter of the mound of rubbish, I knew I could climb the outer wall without being observed. This was the opportunity I had been watching for morning after morning; and at last it came. As I went into the yard from the stable, the warder on guard stepped into the cow-house opposite. I seized the opportunity. A few paces brought me to the mound of rubbish. I doubled round it, turned into the little passage, and climbed over the wall by the help of the stuff piled against it. I alighted safely on the other side; I looked about me for one moment to consider which direction I was to take, and then set off running as fast as I could. The mist hid me from the piquet of the Civil Guard, but I knew that my absence would be discovered before I reached Johnson’s cottage. I ran on and on. Johnson had given me careful instructions, and through my work I had learnt something of the country, so that I had little difficulty in keeping a straight course. Every now and then I looked back to see if I was followed; but I wasn’t, and I flew on alone through the mist. At last I saw a cottage before me. I paused. If it should prove to be the wrong one, to enter it would be to give myself up. I stole cautiously to the little garden wall and looked over. There, in the window, was the sign we had agreed upon. At that moment the sound of voices reached me through the mist. I was pretty nearly exhausted, but I pulled myself together and vaulted the wall. I saw the cottage door open; I rushed in, and, as I crossed the threshold, heard the noise of the men as they turned into the lane.

‘Fortunately for me, Johnson does not live in the barracks in Princetown, but in a cottage on the moor, a little way from the main road to the prison. Without this refuge, escape would have

been impossible. The mist is of no use unless you have help outside.

'In Johnson's cottage I stayed all day, the fox hidden in the hound's kennel. They were scouring the moor I heard, and telegraphing to every part of the country. It had been my intention to remain with Johnson a week, or perhaps longer still, until the first vigour of the search had subsided. But I had a chance of getting away from Tavistock the next morning which was not to be missed. There was to be a special excursion to London, and Johnson told me that the station was sure to be crowded. So when it was dusk, I dressed myself in my disguises and took the small supply of money which my discharged friend had sent with them—believing I meant to join him in London in a little scheme in which he had a use for a gentleman—and about nine o'clock we stole out of the cottage. Johnson was my guide. He led the way across the moor, boggy and pathless out there, in the direction of Tavistock. It was a fine night: moonlight but cloudy: the right night for our purpose. As we crossed the more open places we kept a sharp look-out for any parties that might be out in search of me. When we reached Tavistock—we had made a considerable circuit—it was long after midnight.

'There is not much more to tell you. Outside the town Johnson left me, and turned home again across the moor. I spent the rest of the night under a haystack. I got to the station in time for the train, and found the place so crowded that a disguise half as good as mine would have carried me through. I saw one man who might have known me, but he was being pushed about by the crowd, and didn't catch sight of me. . . . And there you have the whole story. It has been an experience to take years off one's life.'

He paused. The more human emotion passed from his face, and the look of repressed violence came back to it.

'Now you know the whole story,' he repeated. 'You can guess what I have come for.'

Sir George asked him to explain.

'My daughter.'

'For Maggie!'

'Yes, for Maggie. It is for her sake I have escaped. Where is she? I want to see her.'

He turned to Sir George as he spoke, and his eyes had in them more than their natural brightness.

'You wish to see her now?'

Leigh paused for a moment. 'No, not now, perhaps; not till this evening. But tell me about her; is she like her mother? Does she ever ask after me?'

'Yes, she is very like her mother. She has the same hair and the same blue eyes.'

'Ah, I knew she would! That's just how I have been thinking of her. It seems funny. The last time I saw her she was a baby playing on my knee. And, I suppose, now she is grown up. Grown up! It seems funny, somehow, when one comes to think of it.'

He had turned from Sir George, and was leaning against the chimney-piece, his head resting upon his hand, looking into the empty grate. For some minutes neither spoke. Suddenly Leigh looked up, and repeated his previous question.

'Does she ever ask after me?'

Sir George hesitated. 'You see,' he said, 'she does not know your story. I promised her mother on her deathbed that I would not tell it to her: and I have kept my promise.'

'Then I will tell her myself,' he said. 'She shall hear the whole story, and decide for herself. I won't deceive her; and,' he added, with an effort, 'if she comes with me, it shall be of her own accord.'

'What do you mean? You don't mean to take her with you!' cried Sir George, in consternation.

'That's what I have come for,' Leigh said.

'Good Heavens! it is not possible!'

'That's what I have come for,' he repeated.

'But not to-day? You don't want to take her to-day?'

'That's what I have come for,' said Leigh, doggedly.

Sir George was confounded. The audacity of the proposal deprived him of the power to consider it. He had lived for many years a life of inactivity and seclusion, in which the demands for prompt decision had been comparatively few; and the circumstances he had had to deal with had been always tolerably familiar; he was wholly unprepared to meet the suddenness and novelty of such an emergency as this. Leigh's proposal appeared to him simply monstrous—a proposal that admitted of no serious consideration; and yet not only had the proposal been made, but it had been made by a man in whom he saw there was a power of tremendous determination. There was a force, an intensity of purpose, in



Leigh with which he felt himself to be pitiaibly unequal to contend.

‘But where are you going? How can you provide for her? Supposing you are arrested, what will the Law have to say to her? Your life must be one of the utmost uncertainty and apprehension; what right have you to make her, or even to let her, share it with you?’

‘What right?’ retorted Leigh, fiercely. ‘What right? Every right. The right of a father to his daughter’s affection—his daughter’s obedience. I have every right that a man can have. But no, I will give her her choice,’ he broke off. ‘I will not force her to come with me.’

‘It is preposterous,’ murmured Sir George.

‘If she does not come with me now,’ Leigh went on, ‘how will she be able to find me? They may drive me from place to place. Besides, they might watch her and follow her, expecting her to join me. If she comes now, her presence will lessen the risk of detection; it will make my disguise more effectual. People will see in us a middle-aged man and his daughter; and what can be more natural? Who will suspect me of being what I am? No, I tell you, now’s the time.’

‘But the very uncertainty of which you speak shows that you have no right to take her—to take her from a home where she is surrounded with every comfort, to start with you upon wanderings Heaven knows where or for how long!’

‘I tell you I have an absolute right,’ Leigh replied, more fiercely than he had yet spoken, bearing with difficulty the strain of this opposition. ‘Is she not my child? Is she not all I have left in life? Think of what my life has been for these seventeen years. Look at my hands. Look at them. They will tell you the kind of life I have lived, and the kind of work I have done. It has been horrible—horrible—horrible!—a nightmare. . . . And the time I have lost! I felt in the train this morning how the world has changed since I left it. The trains are different; the stations have a different look. The people I saw belong to another generation. I bought a newspaper. All the names were new to me. I read the leading article. It was about something I had never heard of. Everything has changed. And what can I do? What is there for a man in my position to do? What human kind of life is possible for me? I have nothing but the child: absolutely nothing. And you ask me what right I have to her! My God! the cruelty of

it. It is just the thought of Maggie that has kept me alive. You can't understand that. You can understand what it is to do the work I have been doing; to have the hardships I have had to endure; to herd with the men I have been herding with; but what you can't understand is the craving for affection, just to be with some one who cares for one, which grows up in a man during a life like that. And you will see—when she knows my story, she will come with me. She will listen to my wrongs . . . Why do you doubt me? They *are* wrongs. It was a lie; I was innocent; you know I was innocent. That villain lied, and they believed him. A blacker lie was never spoken on God's earth!

Sir George listened helplessly. There was a primitive, an absorbing, dominating force and power in the man which bewildered and overcame him. It was long since human nature had appeared before him so rudely and desperately undisguised. His leisurely, reflective, equable habits of mind, the mental habits of the man of leisure and the man of books, were not of a kind to enable him to meet the situation with the decision and concentration it required. Leigh's reasoning touched him. In spite of his better judgment, he was moved by the pleading of his appeal. The claims of the man came home to him: the claim of Leigh as a man, and his stronger claim still as his friend. For Leigh had been his friend in the old days as well as the husband of his sister. Something of the old feeling awoke in him. Pity combined with his constitutional indecision and openness of mind to break his power of objection. The violence which Leigh was unable to control had the effect of deepening his compassion. He keenly felt the pity of the change in him.

'I will tell you my plans,' Leigh said, speaking in his calmer manner. 'I will come back to this room at twelve to-night to see Maggie. You can make some excuse for keeping her up——'

'It will not be necessary: we have a dance here to-night. But——'

'If she consents to come with me, you must drive her to T—— to catch the mail to London. I will meet her outside the station. London is the best place for us. I mean, for the present; we shall get abroad by-and-by. In the morning you can tell people she has been called away to see a friend—or make any excuse you like. I leave that to you.'

The intensity of purpose with which he gave these instructions deprived Sir George of his presence of mind for the moment.

But as he saw Leigh turning suddenly towards the window he recovered himself sufficiently to stop him before he had stepped out on to the terrace.

'Stay a moment, Richard; you have said nothing about money. Is not your present supply nearly exhausted?'

Leigh turned back and took his brother-in-law's hand.

'Thank you, George,' he said, gently. Yes, my present stock is nearly exhausted.'

'The money I have managed for you and Maggie since my poor sister's death is now a considerable property. There will be ample for you to live upon. But it is ready money, of course, you need now. Fortunately, I happen to have more than I usually keep by me. I will have it ready for you to-night.'

'Thank you, George,' he said again, pressing the hand he still held. 'I can make no arrangement about the other money now; but I should like Johnson to be paid as soon as possible. And you have my word for it—Maggie shall be free to choose.' And so saying, he stepped out on to the terrace, turned quickly into the shrubbery—and was gone.

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## CHAPTER V.

But the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

THE festivities at the Court began early because Sir George had an old-fashioned liking for early hours. Mrs. Fry in an expensive silk gown, whose slight want of fashion heightened the little look of old-world good-breeding peculiar to her, received the guests and did the honours of the house very graciously. She was a lady who was to be seen at her best on great occasions; and though she had taken as little part in the preparations as she could, and was opposed to dancing on principle, she was not the person to compromise the credit of the family before the world.

The Court that night had opened its doors wide. Sir George had no neighbours of his own social importance, but county people were there who had driven over from a distance. There were the members of families who lived in houses as old-fashioned as the Court, in country places still remote from a railway, and who maintained their solemn old family traditions in fine unconsciousness of the encroachments of a ruthless democracy. They were people to whom the Court, as an institution, greatly appealed,

and whose respect for Sir George was sincere. And there were the members of other families who had moved with the times and who went up to London for the season—people whose traditions were as solemn as the others', and who were never quite happy at the extent to which they had sacrificed them. These had, in some cases, brought their friends in their carriages, strangers from London, men who knew nothing of the neighbourhood, whose conversation reeked of fashionable experiences, and who danced too much with the girls with whom they had come. And there were the humble people who lived near the Court—the wife and daughters of Captain Tufton, at Everington; of Mr. Walrond, a gentleman of good family but small means; of Mr. Tulse, a writer of heavy books and a friend of Sir George; with the wives and daughters of a sprinkling of clergymen, amongst them being Mrs. Rundle, who approached Edwards and the footmen with an excessive politeness which made them feel a little well-bred contempt for her.

'Well-meanin' woman, Mrs. Rundle,' Edwards observed. 'I like her myself, and always did. They don't go out much, you can tell that; but she always looks pleasant as if she was enjoyin' herself; and she has a friendly way with her as is amusin' to see.'

The hero of the evening was Waveney. His position was a little imposing. As the heir to a baronetcy, to an establishment like the Court, and to an exceedingly fine range of family acres, he was felt to be a young gentleman whose coming of age was worth taking seriously. His successes at school and college had won him a certain reputation, so that Maggie was by no means alone in expecting results from his future. Sir George had dropped a hint or two as to a political career for him, and there was a general feeling that he was likely to do something important. And though most of these people had known him from childhood, though he had stayed at their houses and had often shot with the men, there was a little air of aloofness about the young gentleman, a delicate shade of reserve, which suggested that he was not quite one of them, and marked him off from the other young fellows of the neighbourhood. If his bearing otherwise had been less modestly unaggressive, or if he had not met country requirements by being a tolerable shot and a capable player at lawn tennis, this touch of independence might not readily have been forgiven him; as it was, he had very few enemies, while some of

the nearer friends of the family were frankly disposed to make much of him. At all events his dancing was admirable, and his dark intelligent pale face was one of the handsomest to be seen at the Court that night.

‘How is it going?’ Maggie asked, having met him at the doorway between the two halls. ‘It’s a success, isn’t it?’

‘I think it is going uncommonly well. When are we to have our dance, Maggie?’

‘Oh, not yet. I am too busy.’

‘You have not danced at all, have you?’

‘No; one must look after the people.’

‘Bother the people! You have looked after them enough.’ He glanced at his card. ‘I have kept the next waltz for you. It’s a jolly one. We have danced to it before. And there’s the music beginning. Come, Maggie, we must have this one.’ And she, yielding to temptation, put her hand on his arm.

There are more ways of dancing than one. It is an exercise that induces very different emotions, which reveal themselves in very different expressions upon the faces of dancers. Waveney danced well, and Maggie danced still better; but there were plenty of good dancers in the room that night; plenty of couples that moved rhythmically and gracefully together; plenty of straight, clean-limbed, well-appointed young fellows; plenty of pretty dresses, and pretty, well-bred faces. But little by little, as they danced and danced, as the seductive spirit of the pleasure-laden music gained on them, people began to look at our couple; they had a little air apart, there was something peculiarly intimate and personal in their pleasure, an expression of mutual understanding in their movements, a look about them as if they consciously belonged to one another. The music rose and quickened, then dropped for a passage soft, lingering, full of the suggestion of everything that is rich and voluptuous and happy, and Maggie gave herself up to the music and the movement, and danced and danced until she seemed to have passed with Waveney into some unimaginable region of delight. Then suddenly—unexpectedly to her, for she was dancing to the spirit of all waltzes rather than to the music of this one—the violins ceased, the couples separated, the girls putting their hands demurely on their partners’ arms, there was a movement of the company from the room, and the empty stretch of polished floor merely reflected the lights on the walls.

'No more, dear. After a dance like that, one feels as if one would never want to dance again.'

'That's rather an odd feeling, isn't it, Maggie?'

'I have the same feeling when I have finished a book which I have enjoyed very much. I feel as if I could never begin another.'

Waveney laughed. 'I know what you mean. But I vote we have another dance by-and-by, all the same.'

Maggie shook her head. 'Aunt Maria is doing her duty nobly, heroically, but——'

'She is a little out of practice,' he suggested.

'Yes, and I must look after her. And I think if I dance again, I must dance with some one else.'

'Very well,' he said. 'You know best. After all, we have all life to dance in, haven't we?'

'I hope so,' she answered lightly.

'Pray Heaven! you have,' murmured Sir George, who happened to have overheard them. 'Pray Heaven! you have.' And the look in his face as he watched them showed his sense of the irony of their words.

For him it was a night of strange and aging experience. His restlessness and anxiety had been deepening as hour after hour had slipped by, bringing midnight, and with it the event he dreaded, nearer and nearer to him. At twelve Richard Leigh was to return, and Sir George knew that the time was drawing near when he must call Maggie away, and in some degree prepare her for the interview. All through the evening he had been watching her. At another time it would have given him pleasure to observe her happiness, to see her the object of others' admiration, to note how simple and unspoiled she remained in spite of all her successes. Now, in the midst of her enjoyment, he saw the sword hanging above her head, and it hurt him cruelly to think that it was by his hand it must fall.

He watched the clock, and after each dance he would look up to see how much nearer it was to midnight.

Yet he felt he was powerless. He reproached himself for having allowed Leigh's reasoning to move him; he knew that Leigh's plan was preposterous, that the idea of permitting him to take Maggie away was one no sensible man would entertain. He felt the full force of the arguments on his own side, he heard the reproaches that awaited him if those arguments should not prevail. But he felt, too, the spell of the man's presence—the strong,

compelling, primitive force and power that were in him, with the claim of that latent tenderness which had persisted as the deepest fact in his nature. 'What you can't understand is the craving for affection, just to be with some one who cares for one, which grows up in a man during a life like that.' No, Sir George admitted that he did not understand it, but he could feel the horror and the pity of it, and he knew that if the interview had to be gone through again, he would not be able to act differently. At least, he told himself, he had no right to deny his brother-in-law the pleasure of seeing his child.

A few minutes before twelve he went into his study. He lit the reading lamp, and opened the glass doors. The moon was dropping its white light on to the terrace, girding it with the shadows of the trees in the shrubbery, the path through which lay in corresponding darkness. He stood for a few seconds watching the scattered clouds which were being carried gently to the moon. The chill night air was a comfort to him. The breeze, which drew a rustling from the summer leaves, soothed the trouble of his forehead, and quieted its aching nerves. As the sound of the last stroke of twelve from the clock in the tower above died away, a figure emerged from the darkness of the shrubbery and came into the moonlight.

Sir George turned back into the room, and Richard Leigh followed him.

'Is she coming?' were the first words Leigh uttered.

Sir George said that he would fetch her.

'There is no time to be lost. Be careful not to excite suspicion. Are there many people about in the passage?'

'No; they are on the other side of the house. You are safe here.'

'Very good; I will wait inside till you bring her.'

Sir George met Maggie in the hall.

'Come here, my dear, I want to speak to you,' he said.

'Yes, uncle; is there anything I can do for you?' she asked, smiling.

'I want to speak to you for a moment,' he repeated. 'There is some one who wishes to see you.'

'Some one who wishes to see me? Who is it? Do they want to see me now?'

'Yes, love. It is a gentleman. He is in my study waiting for you.'



'A gentleman?' she asked, looking up in surprise. 'What can he want with me at this time of night?'

'I think he would rather tell you himself,' said Sir George. 'You must prepare your mind for a surprise, Maggie. People don't usually pay visits at this time of night, but your visitor could not get here before; and he has something important to tell you—something it is necessary for you to hear. He has news to give you. In fact—he comes from your father!'

'From my father? Where is the gentleman? Have you seen him?'

'He is waiting for you in my study. We will go to him at once.'

They reached the door almost as he spoke.

'You go in to him, love; I will come to you presently,' he said, opening the door for her.

'Very well, uncle; you won't be long, will you?' she asked, looking up into his face as she passed him to go in.

'No, love, I won't be long.'

Richard Leigh was sitting by the table, his head resting on his hand, his face screened from the light by the green shade of the lamp, which burned dim and yellow against the moonlight outside. He looked up as the door opened, and, as his daughter entered, sprang to his feet—she was so like her mother! For some moments he stood gazing at her. It seemed as if his young dead wife had come back to him—come back to take up the thread of life where it had been broken off seventeen years before. He had often pictured Maggie to himself; he had always thought of her as being like her mother; but now that she was at last in his presence, it appeared more natural that the dead should have come back to greet him, on his release from his own long living death, than that the child should have grown up so exactly to resemble the dead. The old days returned to him. It was not his daughter who was before him; he had no associations with her except as the child who used to play upon his knee. It was his wife he saw; and as he looked at her the years of his imprisonment faded away, and the life before grew into a clear and vivid reality.

Maggie had advanced to the table. She stood watching her visitor with feelings at once of dread and expectation. On the whole it was the dread which was uppermost. The suddenness of the summons, the lateness of the hour, the transition from the

glitter of the ball-room to the chequered obscurity of this dim room frightened her, and prevented her mind from seizing the possibilities the situation presented. Moreover, though she had been taught to respect her father's name, still he had been left, but a name to her. The intensity of Leigh's gaze was intolerable; to escape from it she decided to speak to him.

'My uncle tells me you wish to see me,' she said.

The spell was broken. He advanced, and offered her his chair.

'Yes,' he answered. 'Won't you take this seat? What I have to say may take some time.'

Maggie sat down in another chair. Leigh looked at her inquiringly for a moment, and then said—

'Would you mind my locking the door? I would rather we were not interrupted, and, to tell the truth, I should prefer no one seeing me to-night for reasons I will explain to you.'

Maggie shuddered; Leigh returned to his seat and continued—

'Your uncle has probably told you the object of my visit—that I have news to give you of your father.'

Maggie said that this was so.

'I believe you have heard nothing of your father for some years?'

'No; not for as long as I can remember.'

'Do you know where he was when he was last heard of?'

'I cannot say exactly; somewhere abroad—in America, I think. He went away when my mother died, and has scarcely been heard of since.'

Leigh paused for a moment.

'Does your uncle ever speak of your father? Has he—told you much about him?'

'No; my uncle seldom speaks of him. He has told me that he was very fond of me as a child.'

'And is still—I can answer for that. You have never heard his story?'

'No.'

'Then I will tell it you.'

He looked at Maggie to see what effect he had produced upon her, and resumed—

'It is a miserable story, and I am afraid it will pain you to hear it. Your uncle has kept it back, he tells me, through a promise he made your mother on her deathbed. It is as well

that it should have been so. You would have gained nothing by hearing it earlier; it would only have repelled you the more.

‘It happened seventeen years ago, when you were—let me see—a little child of two. You probably know that your father was in the City? Yes, your uncle would naturally have told you. His business was an important one, and promised to develop considerably. But—and here was the whole mischief—he had a partner, a Mr. Knight, with whom he was not on good terms. In fact, it had more than once seemed probable that the partnership would be dissolved. Knight was a man of loose habits, whose life out of the office was not of a kind to commend him to those who had to deal with him in it. He was involved, in a way I need not explain to you, in several turf transactions which attained a certain notoriety at the time; and though they were not, of course, connected with the business of the firm, tended to injure its reputation in certain circles. Your father constantly remonstrated with him, pointing out the injury he was doing their business; but Knight resented any interference with his private life, and refused to admit that these transactions could have an effect upon his commercial character. Your father said no more than any man would be justified in saying under similar circumstances. It is true that at times there were warm words between them, but your father had more than enough provocation, though he never said one-half of what was afterwards laid at his door. His conduct was wilfully misconstrued; his resentment against Knight preposterously exaggerated. They lied about this as about everything else. Everyone was against your father. They combined to ruin him—they lied to ruin him.’

Leigh’s manner, which had been quiet enough when Maggie first joined him, had become so violent that his voice as he raised it frightened her, and made her involuntarily move her chair farther from him and a little nearer to the door. Perhaps Leigh noticed this, for he controlled himself as he continued—

‘Knight had an intimate friend, a Mr. Rees, a man younger than himself, but a good deal astuter. Rees was a gentlemanly young fellow, who professed to be living upon an uncle—the truth was, he was living mainly by his wits. Your father found him out, and warned Knight against him. Knight, of course, refused to be warned, and only became more intimate with Rees. Rees fleeced him. But it was worse than that: your father had sus-

pitions about him of a different kind—from his intimacy with Knight's wife. Rees knew that your father was watching him, and the ill-will between them was naturally increased. If these suspicions were correct, as I believe they were, you have an obvious motive for the mur— ah, poor child !' he broke off, noticing at last the girl's pale frightened face. 'I have frightened you. We will wait a little. I know it is a terrible story. I wish I could spare it you. But, you see—'

'Go on, please,' she murmured. 'I wish to hear it.'

'Well, one night,' he said, eager to continue, 'that is to say, on the fatal night, your father and Rees dined at Knight's house. Nothing occurred during dinner, and at the usual time Mrs. Knight left the table and went to the drawing-room. After she had gone, the conversation gradually turned upon dangerous and unpleasant subjects—you are listening? I know it is hard to follow; but you must try—the conversation somehow turned on racing matters. Your father never knew how it was. It was a subject they generally avoided, and before Rees it was the last he would have chosen. One thing led to another—your father never could account for it—till at last a quarrel arose between your father and his partner. Knight declared that he had no right to interfere with his private life. Your father said that the credit of the firm was at stake, and that these matters made a public scandal. And so the quarrel passed from bad to worse till at last—you are listening?—till at last your father hinted at his suspicions of Rees and his wife. Knight sprang to his feet.

"By God! it's a lie!" he cried, and struck your father full in the face. In an instant your father had returned the blow. They closed—struggled for a few seconds—then Knight fell to the floor stabbed. Your father stood over him with the knife in his hand. Rees had stabbed him while he was struggling with your father: your father had only drawn the knife from the wound.'

Leigh leaned forward and buried his face in his hands.

Maggie sat motionless. A great horror had crept over her, numbing her, rendering her almost incapable of thought. A fearful question had thrust itself upon her—a question as to the man before her—a suspicion from which she recoiled as from a possibility too terrible to face.

'What then?' she asked; for the silence, broken by his moans, was intolerable.

He looked up, and, steadying his voice, said—

'They all saw him with the knife in his hand. Mrs. Knight and the servants had come into the room; and he stood there holding the knife. He dropped it, but it was too late; they had all seen him. Rees said, "He has stabbed him: go for the police." They did all they could for Knight, but he died before the policeman came, and your father was arrested. He—an innocent man—was arrested for a horrible crime.'

'An innocent man,' Maggie repeated unconsciously.

'Then he was tried. They all said they had seen the knife in his hand. Rees said that he had done it. He lied; they all lied. Everything went against him. Words he had uttered long before were brought up and used against him. Everyone was against him, and he was condemned—sentenced to penal servitude; they told him he was fortunate not to have been sent to the gallows. And he has been in prison seventeen years. Seventeen years!' he repeated—then paused. Leaning back in his chair, he wiped his forehead, the perspiration having gathered there in heavy beads. Then his bearing changed unexpectedly. 'But now it is over,' he said. 'Yesterday morning he escaped, and——'

'You are my father,' she murmured, almost inaudibly.

He smiled—a smile cruel to see: such tenderness it brought into his hard, suffering and weather-worn face.

'Maggie,' he whispered.

She could not go to him.

His violence had passed away; the harsh voice had grown tender; the haggard face had lost its look of unnatural resolution; but still she remained motionless and speechless—powerless to respond to him. She was stunned by the horror of his story, bewildered by the pleading which, instead of convincing, had left her in an agony of doubt. To think of her father as guilty of a crime like this was more than her reason could endure; to see him for the first time, and hear this story from his lips—it scattered her thoughts to the winds. Still the fact remained—he was her father; and little by little the nature of the girl, with whom duty and affection were the deepest principles of life, began to admit his claim.

And the whole man changed as he talked to her. As she listened to the story of his sufferings, as he brought home to her the life he had lived, with its humiliations, its hardships, its hideous contamination, its awful severance of all human ties, she

ceased to think of his innocence or guilt—she began merely to feel for him. The passionate outbursts which still broke from his pleading tones no longer frightened her; she was moved by the faltering tenderness of hands strange to gentle uses, and was touched by the very intensity of his own self-pity. He spoke of his early life—of her mother, her childhood, his home; and in contrast he drew the picture of his present friendlessness and loneliness, his inevitable warfare with the world. Then at last, drawing nearer to her, leaning forward and taking one hand in his, his hard face lit with that same smile of yearning tenderness, he made his supreme appeal.

‘The only love I can ever hope for is yours. Maggie, will you give it me? I am your father, though you know me to-night for the first time. Maggie, will you come with me? Will you be to me as daughter what your mother was as wife? Will you take her place? Think, Maggie; think of her now. She may be watching you at this moment. Think of the answer she would wish you to give me.’

Pale and motionless she listened to him. One idea had taken possession of her: her father had come for her, and she must go with him; that was all she knew. She never had to decide. The alternative of refusing to go with him did not present itself to her mind. From the first she had given herself up to him; and as a sense of the meaning of her choice, of its hopelessness, came home to her, it almost deprived her of consciousness.

Richard Leigh sat watching her, but the intensity of his own feelings prevented him from taking the measure of hers. ‘Would she go with him?’ was the question beating in his brain, and the suspense in which he awaited her answer strained the limit of his self-control. It was the supreme moment of his fate.

‘Maggie, will you come with me?’ he gasped, almost inaudibly.

There was no answer in the pale blank face; no change in the staring eyes which remained fixed upon him. He repeated his question, a little louder than before.

‘Maggie, speak, will you come with me?’

She heard this time. The lost look left her eyes, and in its place was a look of appeal which would have made any other man relent and change his purpose. But the eyes of Richard Leigh

were blind. His thought was centred in his daughter's answer, and her sufferings passed before him unnoticed. Again he repeated his question—

‘Maggie, Maggie, for God's sake, speak! say, will you come with me?’

She gave him the answer he was waiting for.

‘Yes, I will go.’

He seized her, and took her in his arms. ‘Thank God!’ he cried. ‘Thank God!’

*(To be continued.)*



*GLEAMS OF MEMORY; WITH SOME  
REFLECTIONS.<sup>1</sup>*

BY JAMES PAYN.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD been 'devoted to literature' of a kind that is injuriously called 'light' from childhood, and had spoilt reams of good paper with juvenile compositions. There were probably few undergraduates who had written for so many periodicals (which is, however, a very different thing from writing *in* them) as I had; and I now published a volume of poems, which, if not a financial success, proved a great advantage to me. I may venture to think they had some merit, since they at once introduced me to some of the more genial College authorities, whose acquaintance as a non-reading man I could never have made. W. G. Clark, of whom I have already spoken, was one of them, whose knowledge of English literature was not inferior to the classical attainments for which he was so widely known. He was very literally a host in himself, and gave the brightest dinner parties in College. Of my obligations to him, both then and for years afterwards, I can never speak too highly. George Brimley the critic was another of those elder friends, whom it would be ungrateful indeed not to remember, for he gave me my first review—in the 'Spectator.' I have had hundreds of notices, at least as favourable as I deserved, since then, but none which gave me such ineffable pleasure. I will not say it was 'a turning point in my career,' as is the usual term for such things, because I don't suppose that anything could have turned me from the course I had marked out for myself, but it encouraged me in it exceedingly.

There is a great deal of bad feeling among authors in respect to criticism, which mainly arises, I think, from an exaggerated estimate of its power for good or evil; whereas it can do little good to a bad book and little harm to a good one. The complaints seem to come chiefly from the writers of fiction, and it is quite true that reviewers of that class of literature are not often of a high class. The latest joined of the staff are put on for that

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1894, in the United States.

duty; the young dogs are 'blooded' on the novels. Their contributions to criticism would hardly be of much importance save for the belief many people attach to whatever appears in print. Strange to say there are no more superstitious folks as regards this matter than journalists themselves. They have been 'through the mill,' they know all the ropes that move her ladyship the Press, but they retain a mysterious respect for 'pretty Fanny's ways' that is quite touching in its simplicity. Used as they are to type they never get 'case' hardened. I have known a journalist speak quite gravely of an essay upon some great genius about whom everybody has made up their minds, though he knew it was written by some one who knew nothing about the subject, simply because it appeared in a periodical of good standing. Nothing can be more ridiculous than this fetish, but if it influences the journalist how much more must it affect the novelist!

It is not to be disputed that a favourable review may assist a young author in 'bringing him on' (like early asparagus), and there are critics who have the intelligence to recognise merit and the courage to express their opinions; but the ordinary reviewer, who is also more bent upon doing himself justice than his author, is 'funky' of bestowing praise where it has not yet been given, and finds detraction much more easy work. This is the real *casus belli* which the young author has with the reviewer. As for the old and established author, it may still heighten his pulses to be praised, but it makes no difference to his literary circulation. Those who like him read him, however he is depreciated by the critics, and those who do not like him will not be induced to read him by the most eulogistic recommendations. Upon the whole, therefore, I do not think the authors' grievance is a very grave one, and if a writer is so sensitive as to be made miserable for more than twelve hours by an unfavourable review, it seems to me that he has mistaken his profession. An author of eminence once told me that his wretchedness arising from this source endured with him precisely for a week, until the next issue of the peccant periodical, when it pitched into somebody else.

Another matter which is much debated in connection with literary affairs is whether a writer is ever justified in bringing out a book at his own expense. Of course the publisher is the proper person to take the risks if you can find one; but suppose the book is a volume of poems? If Milton, junior, should bring the MS. of a new 'Paradise Lost' in his pocket, and nothing else, to Pater-

noster Row, in manuscript it would remain. No publisher, therefore, I need hardly say, defrayed the expenses of *my* little volume of verse, the production of which, however, I have never regretted : its social profits were very considerable, though its financial ones were *nil*. For intelligent society is just what a young man of character is most in need of and finds it most difficult to get. His usual difficulty is that he can find no one to sympathise with his ambition, or share his tastes ; indolent and pleasure-loving, as are most of his class, he fritters his time away in amusements, which in future life he cannot easily dispense with, even if he does not become a confirmed idler ; above all, he acquires no sense of comparison, and takes for wit what is merely flippancy, and for humour what is only the possession of high spirits. In later life he generally becomes a citizen of Bohemia, which he believes to be the greatest Republic in the world, though it is merely a metropolitan district.

From this fate, as I believe, the publication of my little volume saved me, by introducing me to a higher sphere of companionship than was to be found in ordinary undergraduate life. The days when a College fellow meant a don have long departed, and even in my time there were many men—at all events at Trinity—whose tastes were not restricted to academic pursuits, but who were in closer touch with the modern world of letters than any I had yet met with. Indeed up to that date I had only met with one man in any way connected with literature, Thomas Noel, a very hermit as regarded any knowledge of his literary brethren, and who was so little known himself that his pathetic poem 'The Paupers' Drive' was for years attributed to Thomas Hood. He was a bookworm of the legitimate type, and a great student of Elizabethan literature. Boy as I was, I was the means of making him known to Miss Mitford, of whom he became a constant correspondent, and who introduced his poems to the public in her 'Recollections of a Literary Life.' A childless widower, he lived alone, in a picturesque but secluded residence, and though one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men was shunned by his neighbours, for the heinous offence, as I always understood, of having buried the only child with whom he had been blessed in his garden instead of the churchyard. In these days it would have been considered, at the worst, but an eccentric act of affection.

Indeed, after a long life during which there have been many changes in public opinion, there is nothing, as it seems to me,

which has altered more than the liberty which I now see accorded to private judgment in matters connected with the grave, and beyond it, over which society—who nevertheless took far less interest in them than at present—used to claim the most absolute jurisdiction. If a man went to chapel instead of church, it was almost thought, as our parish clerk in Berkshire always expressed it in the Creed, that ‘he dissented into hell,’ and if he went neither to church nor chapel he was of course an atheist.

My Cambridge friends, of the elder sort, though most of them belonged to the clergy, were free from these prejudices, and freed me from them.

Though I had been by no means brought up ‘in the strictest sect of the Pharisees,’ unless fox-hunting folks can be so described, yet my ideas upon spiritual matters were of the narrowest. There were some old Roman Catholic gentry in our neighbourhood whom we used often to visit, but it was certainly long after childhood that I regarded them not indeed with the horror of a good Protestant but with a certain awe. In one particularly kind and genial family I was as a boy a constant visitor, but I could never think of them as other friends, and regarded their very beautiful private chapel—especially towards the gloaming—in anything but a religious light. From their great library, full of illuminated missals and marvellous records of the old faith, I snatched a fearful joy, and when the kind, plump priest, who used to play bowls with me on their green, chanced to come in and ask me with his placid smile what I was reading, I thought of the Grand Inquisitor and perspired freely.

I find it the most difficult of all efforts of memory to recall those feelings now; they seem as far away as the Dark Ages, which is indeed their proper *habitat*, and separated from me not by a lifetime, but by æons of time. Since then I have known men of all creeds (some of them, as it still strikes me, very queer ones), but the longer I live the more I am convinced that Belief, however goodly the seed, is not to be compared in importance with its fruit, Behaviour.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the friends of whom I speak were Freethinkers of the vulgar sort; but they ‘fought the spectres of the mind and laid them’ without the assistance of holy water. It was new to me to hear questions of ‘dogmatic theology’ debated, especially by persons so much ‘at their ease in Zion,’ but it was intensely interesting. The discussions were not

without their mixture of humour, but of a very different sort from the flippancy with which such subjects are often treated by that portion of the undergraduate world which is not 'serious.' To think, without fear or scoff, is a lesson which most young men are much in need of; and to do this was now taught me. I had friends of my own year and time too, dearer and nearer than these, and with gifts as great though as yet undeveloped, and some of them I am thankful to say death has not yet taken away from me. Indeed if I were to sum up the advantages of a University education in a word, it would be its opportunities for making friendships. Unlike those of our school time they have root and bear transplantation, and year by year they increase though they cannot multiply. As to the education itself, it is best and shortest to say that I was incapable of profiting by it, and only 'just escaped from disgracing myself,' as the then Master of Trinity used to put it, by taking an ordinary degree.

I had been for some time engaged to be married, and had also, which was not quite so agreeable to me, undertaken to 'go into the Church.' Literature, it was thought, was not a good profession to marry upon, and to judge by the profits it had yet produced me, it was certainly not. As an initial step to my becoming a divine, it was, however, necessary to pass 'the Voluntary'—a theological examination in my case very inappropriately named—and at the brink of this I, so to speak, shied. I overheard two friends discussing the matter. 'He has no "call,"' observed the more serious of the two. 'He *has* a "call,"' returned the other, 'but it is in the opposite direction.' The observation was an injurious one as regarded the literary profession, but its personal application was so far true that I doubted my fitness for the ministry. It is true I had once preached an extempore sermon, followed by a 'collection,' for two poor persons (one of them the preacher), but that success had not convinced me of my suitability for the priestly office; it was not that 'it was not good enough,' but that '*I* was not good enough,' and in that moral conviction I turned my back upon 'the Voluntary,' and the Church of England lost a divine.

During even my undergraduate days I was constantly attempting, with the perseverance of a terrier watching at a rat hole, to enrich the periodical literature of my country. When I hear a judge say to a prisoner, 'If you had used only half the intelligence you possess in the pursuit of some useful and honourable calling,

&c.,' I always think of the hundreds of young persons who are always attempting to get into print. It is the same sort of instinct that actuates the habitual criminal, but when the judge adds 'you would have been successful' (i.e. in the calling) I think he makes a mistake. The saying that a good chess-player is a good mathematician spoilt is a similar error. Human intelligence, and especially where it is considerable, has a tendency to be special, to run in a groove; and with regard to the aspirants after a literary life who have come in my way, though the vast majority of them have known bad fortune, the most capable ones did succeed, and in all probability would not have done so in any other calling.

Moreover, even when they do not succeed, some of them never give up the idea that they ought to do so. Indeed the chronic rejected contributor has often so 'good a conceit of himself' as is not to be expressed except in his own words. Here are a couple of genuine letters embalmed in an editor's album:—

'DEAR SIR,—Being a student of poetry, and a member of a notorious Literary Association, I want you to embrace in your respected organ a poem of mine. It is a poem of a high and sustained type, and would be greatly suited to your organ. I have appeared in other periodicals and have four years' labour to recommend me to you. I feel sure you cannot do better than accept me as a regular contributor to your organ, which I know you will do, when you perceive the stamp and quality of my work, and the prolific power of my mind. I have drunk deep at the stream of literature, and been fascinated by the Greek grandeur of literary workmanship. I have lately studied the Sonnet, in the perfect Italian style, and have Sonnets which you would greatly appreciate. When will you take this poem I have referred to, and what is your price, if I become a regular contributor? for unlike most writers I have an originality of expression which is astonishing, and its originality is full of, and bathed in, beauty of thought-expression. I love to wander in the clime sublime, and pick all the finest, and most Heaven-reflecting, of the flowers of thought. Kindly reply.'

A writer of this kind is not easily persuaded that he has mistaken his profession. He is too self-confident to be angry at rejection. Self-confidence, however, may exist with an



honest indignation. The second gentleman kicks against the pricks :—

‘SIR,—As one of those that declined to accept my “Essay on the Ancient State of Literature,” I call upon you for the second and last time to peruse it. If, after careful studying the article, you remain unshaken in your determination to deny me or my fellow-victims justice, and basely to sacrifice the sacred cause of literature to your own sordid cupidity, I have no more to say, for reproaches are idle. And hopelessly callous as you are, I must for the future leave you to the conscience of which you have such a plentiful lack.’

The despotism of editors is not so arbitrary as it used to be. My memory does not go back to the fear in which the ‘Quarterly,’ ‘so savage and slaughterly,’ used to be held ; one would have supposed it took its name from its quartering as well as executing its victims. In my time nobody cared much for the attacks of the heavier reviews, partly, perhaps, because they were generally belated, and did not bear down upon authors till their reputation had been established ; but the power of the weekly organs of literature was still considerable. The then editor of the ‘Athenæum,’ Hepworth Dixon, was greatly feared by the small fry of literature, and not much liked by the large fry. It is well known that Thackeray had objections to his daughter becoming an authoress, from the apprehension of what Dixon might write of her work. I remember as a young man, when speaking rather gushingly of the kindness I had received from editors in Dickens’ presence, he observed with a droll look that he concluded I had not yet made the acquaintance of Hepworth Dixon. I had met him, however, at dinner, and had had rather a humorous experience of him. I was sitting next to a great Eastern scholar, who had told me quite as much as I wanted to hear of Assyria, and was still going on, when he was suddenly interrupted by the host, who in a tone of conciliatory reproof observed, ‘Professor So-and-So, silence if you please, Mr. Hepworth Dixon is about to say something.’ I forget what he said, but the rout of the Assyrian was complete, and amused me exceedingly.

Before I took my degree I had paid my first visit to the Lake Country, and it made a great impression on me. I had been brought up in the South, and had never beheld a mountain, much



more such an assemblage of them as is to be seen at the Head of Windermere. It is the fashion among people who travel with Cook's tickets to Switzerland to sneer at the Lake Hills, but the fact is that the elevation from which their big brothers of the Continent are viewed is so much greater that they do not loom so much more largely in proportion, nor make the difference between hill and plain so much more pronounced. It is only in a few cases, such as the Jungfrau, where the mountain springs up on a sudden (like the mountains in the 'comparative heights' of the school geographies), that the contrast is so very marked; in the case, for instance, of Mont Blanc, its head is lost in its high shoulders. At all events, when I visited Switzerland, after having seen the English fells, the peculiar effect of mountains on a denizen of the valley was not as striking as when I first saw the Langdale Pikes. It must, however, be confessed that I love the Lake district as a faithful husband who loves his wife upon his golden wedding day no less than when she was his bride. From first to last it has been the locality most dear to me, quite independently of its associations, though they, too, have been of the most attractive kind. It was there that I first made the acquaintance of persons it would have been a stroke of good fortune to know anywhere—Miss Martineau, Matthew Arnold and his brother William, Allingham and Clough, the poets, and others—but who, met amid such scenes of beauty and far from the moil and toil of town, were seen at their best.

I visited the district, while an undergraduate, with companions of another but not less genial kind, for I spent part of a long vacation there more than once with some of my College contemporaries. We did not 'paint' the district 'red,' which would have been an inappropriate colour, but we made matters lively there. We were always fixed on some wild expedition or another, and carried it out whatever was the weather, and in that locality it is generally wet. Never shall I forget that pouring day in which we made the Honister Crag round from Keswick on horseback. An intelligent guide had taught us how to keep our cigars alight even in tempest by holding the lighted end inside our mouths; it was very convenient, if a little suffocating, but it made us present rather a demoniacal appearance to the beholder.

More for the fun of the thing, I fear, than for love of the picturesque, we resolved to see the sunrise from some mountain top. Fairfield was the favoured one, and with infinite pains a tent

was taken up there and pitched for the night. This was lit by four gigantic carriage lamps, and save that, like all tents, it was always too hot when it was not too cold, was a tolerable shelter so long as it stood. But as the night grew on a wind arose such as destroyed the tents of the children of Job, and treated us even worse, for ours came down as we were intent on our cards, and with it the four lamps, whereby some of the party were burnt rather severely before they were extricated, since the flapping canvas drowned their cries. It must have been, I think, after this adventure that the following lines were written, which I find in a note-book of that epoch ; they were evidently the 'moral' of a narrative poem :—

But why your poetical people go  
To such very great heights, and sometimes in the snow,  
To see what they've just left behind down below,  
I really can't tell, for I really don't know.

It did not snow that night, but it rained in torrents, and anything more forlorn than our appearance when morning dawned it is difficult to imagine ; on the other hand, nobody could see us six inches away, for it was a thick fog, and I need not say we never saw the sunrise.

On another occasion, with native assistance, we dragged up a well-furnished luncheon basket to the summit of Helvellyn, when, by some infernal mismanagement, it escaped from our hands and was precipitated down the height of Catch-it-who-can, or some such name. Nobody could catch it, of course. The fate of a very large plum cake, the pride of our landlady, was particularly distressing ; it escaped from the companionship of the other things in the basket and took a tour of its own, making great leaps and bounds till, after one gigantic somersault, it broke into a thousand pieces.

As a rule, I do not like mountains, except to look at. The tourist's notion that Heaven must be 'a Switzerland all downhill' strikes no sympathetic chord within me ; coming down, to my mind, is only less objectionable than going up, inasmuch as it does not last so long.

In the first year of my marriage I spent the winter in Ambleside. By that time I knew the Lake Country thoroughly well, but only in its summer dress. To see it put on its winter garb, from the white cap on the summit of the green hill that marks 'the first snow on the fell' to the vast snow-shroud over vale and

mountain, was a glorious experience; yet how seldom is it taken advantage of, though within the reach of so many! That on a frosty morning one can leave London and the same night behold the skaters upon Rydal Lake by moonlight is an idea that never occurs to anyone; yet no transformation scene ever beheld on the stage can be more complete. It is veritable fairy land, with such accessories in isle and rock and snow, and in the echoes from the everlasting hills, as no manager, however enterprising, could supply. It is no wonder that, of all the splendours of his mountain home, Wordsworth dwells upon it as its crowning glory.

In those days Ambleside was a very primitive spot as compared with its modern aspect, and I remember that in the butcher's shop the joints bespoken by the inhabitants were marked with their names to prevent them being inadvertently disposed of to others—Mr. Jones's leg, Mr. Robinson's heart, and other customers' limbs.

The success—as I have some reason to think it—of my little volume of verse encouraged me, like another person but slightly connected with literature, to 'drop into poetry' for a season. I wrote some 'Ballads from English History,' which were published by Harrison Ainsworth in 'Bentley's Miscellany;' looking back at them at this great distance of time, and perhaps because of it, I seem to recognise some merit in them. 'The Death of Cromwell,' from which I venture to reprint a verse or two, was perhaps the best of them.<sup>1</sup>

There is never much difficulty in getting moderately good poems published in certain periodicals if it is distinctly understood that no payment is expected for them. But, indeed, the sums I got for my prose contributions at this time were often so infinitesimal that they might, so far, have almost been poetry. One or two of these compositions found their way into respectable channels such as 'Household Words' and 'Chambers's Journal,' and were of course duly remunerated; but the majority of them appeared in obscure periodicals, all of which are dead. This, however, did not prevent the descendant of one of their proprietors attempting, a quarter of a century afterwards, to lay hands upon some of these effusions. He wrote to say he had one or two of my early sketches in his possession which he thought I might like to have. At first I thought he was referring

<sup>1</sup> Upon reconsideration I spare my readers; that is one temptation overcome, at all events; and I also remember that I reprinted the poem in *Married beneath Him*.

to the original MSS., which he might quite possibly have considered curious ; but it turned out that they were four little stories, extending to about ten pages in all, of which 'he held the copyright.' The stories had been republished, with others, with the consent of the proprietors of the various periodicals, as was stated on the title-page. This he affected to know nothing about—had no recollection of any such permission having been granted (as, indeed, after four-and-twenty years, was likely) by the publisher of whom he was 'the direct representative,' and finished by demanding 'compensation.' I referred him to my legal adviser and heard no more of him ; but, on unearthing some early literary accounts, I found that the aggregate sum received for the four stories was 3*l.* 15*s.*! This is only an illustration of what every author of repute is liable to meet with from the too enterprising publisher. In dealing with Grub Street, which necessity compels when he is young and unknown, he cannot be too careful about the wording of its little agreements.

There are some dangers, on the other hand, against which no prudence can guard. There is the title of your first book, for example. You flatter yourself you have hit upon a good one, but whether it is a new one you can never be certain. The institution of Stationers' Hall, like the existence of snakes and mosquitoes, may be (who knows?) of advantage to somebody, but not to the author. The books are catalogued under their writers' names (which you don't know), instead of by their titles ; it is, therefore, impossible to discover whether your title has been used before or not. But when your book is published you receive this information with a claim for damages. The enterprising publisher again steps in. He has produced a work, many years ago, which fell still-born from the press, but is now going to realise something ; it was published under the very title you fondly imagined you had invented, and though any confusion that could possibly arise in consequence must be to his advantage, he too requires 'compensation.' The case is a particularly hard one, since it is obvious that the name was chosen for its apparent novelty ; if one 'hit upon' 'Vanity Fair' or 'Martin Chuzzlewit' it would be a different matter. But though there is no justice in the claim, there is law upon its side, and the poor author suffers. My first mishap of this kind was brought home to me by the proprietor of the serial in which a certain novel of mine was appearing. 'The coincidence might have been a very serious trouble to you,' he said—'injunc-

tion in Chancery and so on—but I have settled the whole thing for you for five-and-twenty pounds.' He forgot to say that the enterprising publisher had, in the first instance, made his claim upon *him*, and that he had disposed of the affair in this satisfactory manner at my expense.

'The myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty,' says the poet of passion, 'are worth all your laurels, however so plenty,' and there is no doubt his lordship was right, only one does not discover the fact till one is much older. Now I reflect upon it, I not only ought to have been, but was, exceedingly happy at the age he mentions. At four-and-twenty I was happier still, for I had married one of the prettiest and (as was subsequently proved) the best of wives; we were living, or rather lodging, in my favourite haunt the Lake district, and I had seriously taken up my favourite pursuit of literature. It was an idyllic life we spent at Rydal Cottage, under the shadow of Nab Scar, and lulled by the music of the beck that flowed at the garden foot.

We had little to live upon, but sufficient for our simple needs; I have always shrunk from the cold touch of poverty, and am thankful to say I have never felt it. Wealthy—nor indeed what is called 'well off'—I have never been. I am not philosopher enough to consider this an advantage, but what has been borne in upon me a thousand times is the conviction that the notion that society—by which I mean really good society—is influenced in the least degree to our discredit because one has 'small means' is the merest delusion. There are 'carriage people,' of course, that is people who are proud of their carriages and never forget that they possess them, but I am speaking of people really worth knowing, of whatever rank. A man of character, with independence of spirit, is not only never patronised, but no attempt is made to do it.

Of course, if he chooses to undergo the humiliation it is open to him, but it is like going on all fours when the ceiling is of the ordinary height. I had always a dislike, I think, to this mode of locomotion, but what would have preserved me from it at all events was my devotion to comfort. Swell'dom would never have suited me, because of its inconveniences. I resemble the beggar who, when reproached for his useless life, replied, 'Ah, sir, but you don't know how idle I am.' I am not idle, far from it, but I am indolent beyond belief; in my poorest days I would always rather have given a man a shilling than have obliged him by

crossing the road; trouble of all kinds is hateful to me; the details of business—even my own business—are intolerable; but let me have my own poor way and don't 'fash me' with matters of fashion and convention, and I am the most contented soul alive. To this apparently selfish attitude I believe I owe much of the happiness of my life; it has saved me from a hundred temptations; been the means of escape from many a gilded chain, and even caused many virtues to be attributed to me, such as modesty, which, as a matter of fact, I do not possess. I am afraid I have never experienced that sense of inferiority as regards any human being that is so wholesome, we are told, to entertain in the presence of our betters. And I have not found that my betters resented it. The fact is there is nothing which persons of intelligence welcome so much (because it is so rare) as naturalness, and though in my case it may have arisen from a low motive—devotion to personal comfort—natural I have always been.

Naturalness, however, has this defect, that, when persisted in, it renders artificiality and affectation in others much more hateful to us than they really deserve to be, and even the polish of good manners and the dignity inseparable from a great position to be 'suspect.' Every advantage, however, has its drawbacks, among which is a too attentive study of human nature. It became my profession to study my fellow-creatures, and the consequence has been a most unwelcome recognition of defects in persons both near and dear to me. These are among the things which it is much better not to know, nor is it to be supposed that I spared myself—at least as interesting a subject of vivisection as other people—but got at the back of own mind with perfect ease, and was exceedingly sorry to have taken advantage of the opportunity. Some people are much better than they seem to be to the world at large, while others are considerably worse, and I do not require to be told—and should consider it very officious of anyone to tell me—to which of those classes I belong.

There is probably no error more widespread and well established than the idea that we do not—or rather cannot—know ourselves; we can if we choose, or if, as in my case, we are compelled, make our own acquaintance perfectly well. Of course we may be wilfully blind, but is it possible that anyone would take an interest in such a matter equal to our own, or have one tithe of the opportunities of observation? As to seeing ourselves as others see us that is a very different thing, though that too a good deal depends



upon whether we present ourselves to our fellow-creatures full face or edgewise.

I do not suppose that the literary profession has a greater crop of disappointments than any other, but he who is born to follow it feels them more than other people; he is more easily depressed (though also more easily exhilarated), and sees no silver lining behind the cloud. This is especially to be regretted, since there is no calling in which so many misfortunes turn out to be blessings in disguise. The chief one of them is that which we foolishly deplore the most, namely the impossibility, when we are very young, of getting our effusions published at all, a thing which in our later years we have always reason to be thankful for; moreover, what we congratulate ourselves upon often turns out anything but an advantage, as when we are in too great a hurry to dispose of our copyrights, or for the sake of appearing in print bind ourselves perhaps for years to some far-seeing publisher.

My first great literary disappointment was connected with a magazine called 'The Picture;' it was so called because it had a frontispiece printed in colours, the first experiment, so far as I know, of that description. It was undertaken by a man of substance, and the editor he appointed had the good sense to perceive merit in my youthful productions. He arranged with me for a series of articles, and no one who has not been in the same position can understand the satisfaction that conferred upon me; for what the neophyte in literature desires above all things is permanency of employment: to be on 'the staff' of some periodical or another with a heavenly vision perhaps, far away in the clouds, of an editorship, for its crowning glory. Now, such was the malice of fate that the excellent and substantial individual who started 'The Picture' was killed by a railway accident on the very day when the first number of his magazine appeared. I never knew him personally, but I am confident he had no more genuine mourner than myself; for with him the whole undertaking perished, and I was left with half a dozen articles ready written for that luckless periodical on my hands. I have always been, so to speak, half a dozen articles ahead with everything, not from forethought and prudence so much as from nervousness and the fear of not being ready for what was required of me. I doubt if there has been any more dependable contributor as regards punctuality since the art of printing was invented.

How I became possessed of this virtue I do not remember.



At one time I could scarcely have had it, since when a cadet at the Military Academy at Woolwich I came back from town one Saturday after tattoo, and my leave (which I loved) was stopped for the rest of the term. Perhaps it was this lesson that cured me. At all events I have always guarded myself as well as I could against misfortune ; my motto was 'No risks,' as the goose said when she stooped under the entrance to the barn. It is commonly said, by persons who are never in time for anything, that being *before* the time is not punctuality, but the great Duke of Wellington ascribed all his success in life to being 'always a quarter of an hour too early.' This prudence or punctuality was once of immense service to one very dear to me. When my wife and I were a young married couple, we chose, among other picturesque places, for a summer home Lynmouth ; and one day we went with a little party for a picnic in one of the neighbouring bays. It was arranged that some male friends with myself were to return over the cliffs, and my wife and another lady with her father and brother by the sands. We were rowed to the spot in a boat, which after the picnic took back the plates and dishes, and the last words the boatman said were, 'Be sure, ladies, you start at four o'clock at latest, for the tide will come in fast, and this is the only place which has a path up the cliff.'

Somehow or other, notwithstanding his warning words, and also some from myself, the sand-party delayed, and we were glad to see them safe into the next bay. We had no idea that the ease with which they accomplished it was to be their ruin, for the margin seemed so great that they saw no reason for excessive haste, and doubtless loitered. If they had walked ever so fast, however, it is doubtful whether they would have got home in safety ; for the tide came up very fast, and they only got into the second bay by wading : that is, the gentlemen waded, and carried the ladies on their shoulders. In a few minutes the way they had come was barred by the sea, and they saw only too plainly that to pass round the next point was absolutely impossible. The cliffs were insurmountable and the tide tearing in like a mill-race.

I believe that they all behaved very well, though in all human probability they knew their fate was sealed. They passed a terrible quarter of an hour, and then round the farther point came into view the boat, and, though wet to the skin, they managed to get into her. 'It was well,' said the boatman, 'that the young gentleman had paid him to wait,' and indeed but for my 'fidgeti-

ness'—as it had been called up to that date—they would all four have been drowned. Of course this virtue may be carried too far. I had a female relative more 'fidgety' than myself, and on one occasion it was important she should go to Exeter by the Flying Dutchman. She arrived at Paddington long before her time, as she thought, and yet found her train at the platform, at which she was very triumphant. But presently she found herself on a siding. She asked the guard for an explanation, and for the first time discovered that she was in a 'Parliamentary,' which started half an hour before the express, and was shunted to let it go by. On that occasion the laugh was with the unpunctual members of the family.

Some authors can only write as it were on compulsion, when they hear the press thundering behind them, but even the most distant sound of it would have been sufficient to paralyse my energies. I was always afraid of being ill, and unable to perform my promised task, and to have written against time would have made me ill at once. But what was the use of this prudential conduct as regarded 'The Picture'? The six articles I had written expressly for it seemed suddenly to have become waste paper, as the sequins in the Arabian story turn to dead leaves. The articles indeed were short ones, but here was a permanent engagement gone for ever. It seemed a terrible blow, but as it turned out was by no means a matter to be regretted. The executors of the owner of the periodical paid me half price for the articles bespoken. I afterwards enlarged them all (for in those days I was very extravagant with incident and they could afford expansion), and received five times as much for them as had been originally promised; and a few months afterwards I was a regular contributor to 'Household Words,' a periodical of a much better class than 'The Picture' was ever likely to have been. I mention this circumstance for the benefit and encouragement of the junior bar of letters, and it is but an example out of many in my literary life where what seemed to be most unfortunate has turned out to be a cause of rejoicing.

People talk of an 'idea' for the most part with ridicule; but in imaginative literature at least it is very valuable, and, like most things that are precious, hard to find. The most curious thing about it is, however, the difficulty of keeping it; in this respect it excels quicksilver. One would think that when a thing of this kind struck you, you would not be likely to forget it; it seems

at the time that there is little else so well worth remembering, and that while Memory holds her seat this conception so brilliant and original will cling to it. At the moment perhaps—for an idea may strike you at any time—you may not be in a position to set down the germ of it. Some fellow asks you a question about the weather, or the Habeas Corpus Act, and in one instant it has flown for ever. All that it leaves behind it is the sense of the magnitude of your loss. It is like a fish getting off your hook of which you have hardly seen anything and will never see anything more, but which you are conscious was the very largest fish that ever *was* seen. Therefore I earnestly warn all young gentlemen of the pen, if they do happen to have an idea, to set it down in black and white at once, if it is but on the cuff of their shirt.

Before I had my hands full of work I kept up a pretty frequent correspondence with persons more or less my contemporaries and of similar tastes and pursuits. Some of these afterwards attained a considerable eminence in letters. One of them was Calverley, whom all the world now knows as one of our best parodists and translators. Notwithstanding the genial character of his work, his animal spirits were not high till he took pen in hand, when they at once began to mount. In writing to me of a visit he had been making to the New Forest he says: 'I must confide to you two pieces of English which charmed me mightily. (I.) I asked a young lady if a dog which accompanied her was her dog or one of her sister's; and she said, "Oh, it's all our dog," and then asked me if that was correct English. I said I thought it admirable English and a boon to our language. I added that I would ask the great Skeat, but whatever he said I should retain my belief.

'(II.) Another young lady, an enthusiastic horsewoman, watching a friend of hers with much admiration as she rode away, remarked to me, quite as a natural phrase to use (it was the first time I had even seen her), "I like to see a girl look comfee on her gee."

A bearded friend of ours, Joseph W., was the occasion of a parody from Calverley's pen, 'John Anderson, my Jo.' Here is his introduction to the composition:—

'SIR,—As a literary man you will be interested in the discovery I have recently made of the subjoined poem. It was written across the MS. (which I happen to possess) of one of Burns's published letters, and unquestionably in his hand. We have here no

doubt the authentic version of what has been hitherto only seen in a garbled form. The absurdity, you will observe, is satisfactorily got rid of (a true Calverley touch) of persistently calling a man "Jo" whose name was "John"—

Jo Crediton, my Jo, Jo,  
When we were first acquaint  
Your chops were neatly shaven,  
Your bonny brow was brent;  
Now you're a trifle bauld, Jo,  
Atop, but all below  
You're hairy as a Hieland cow,  
Jo Crediton, my Jo.

Another literary friend of my early days was Walter Thornbury, a well-known writer, but because he was a very prolific one not so well thought of, perhaps, as he deserved to be. He turned his hand to everything, which the public, too mindful, perhaps, of the proverb about Jack of all Trades, always resents. He wrote, however, some vigorous and stirring verses, and knew how to tell an old-world story well. Curiously enough, though in his books, so far as I know, there was no grain of humour, he wrote amusing letters, though in a worse hand than my own. Next to Dean Stanley and Lord Houghton, his handwriting was the least legible I ever knew, and in days when the typewriter had not been discovered this made a serious difference in his printer's account. Here is a letter introducing a doubtless illegible MS. to my notice when I was a very young editor indeed:—

'MY DEAR SULTAN,—Behold one of the most humble, grateful, and devoted of your slaves. Deign to cast your one remaining eye with favour on the 13,000 gold kincots, the 7,000 peacocks, and the 1,400 red-tailed apes I now offer before your scintillating throne, and placing your crescent slipper on the nape of my neck, do not—*do* not exclaim (as is so often your wont), "A bowstring for this dog!" or better, "Quick, Mesrour, thy sabre!"'

It was very difficult for me to decline the MS. of a contributor of this kind. The two classes of my fellow-creatures who have been always most attractive to me are the kind and the humorous; indeed, the latter are generally (though I regret to say not always) also the former. I have a very large experience of clever people, and I hope I know how to appreciate them, but cleverness without humour, and especially without kindness, is from a social point of view, at least, a poor thing. You can illuminate your house with electricity, but neither with sheet nor forked lightning.

The fault of barristers is their cleverness ; it often causes them to pretend to cynicism, when they are in reality quite as good-natured as other people ; they are afraid of being thought sentimental and capable of being taken in, which nevertheless sometimes happens even in spite of their precautions. Upon the whole, and for a 'scratch' companion, I prefer a doctor to a man of any other calling. He may not be very good as a conversationalist, but he is rarely very bad, like a cheroot. He has had a genuine experience of life, and has seen down to the depths of it ; a sick man does not attempt to deceive his doctor, or put the best face on his character as he does with a priest. Moreover, what is very unusual, your doctor knows more about you, professionally at all events, than you know about yourself. He does not tell you about it, it is true ; not a word of that aneurism you carry about with you, and which will some day kill you in half a minute, but your consciousness that he may possess such knowledge makes him interesting. The best suggestions I have had made to me for plots for my novels have come from doctors, to whom I have also had cause to be grateful for many things.

A humorous reminiscence occurs to me in this connection. An old friend of mine once told me that he was about to entertain a party entirely composed of this profession. 'Let there be one exception, and ask *me*,' I said, and accordingly I was invited as Dr. Payn. After dinner the conversation took a professional turn, and it made my hair stand on end to hear the exceeding frankness with which the art of healing was discussed. Drugs, it seemed, on the whole did more harm than good, and if Nature were let alone altogether, it was probable that more people would be left alive in the world. One old gentleman, who sat beside me, had alone forborne to join in this astounding conversation, and, emboldened by his silence, I privately confessed to him that I was but a layman, and inquired whether these things were true.

'Certainly not,' he replied. 'It is only a way we doctors have of talking when we are alone together. Leaving things to Nature means letting them go to the Devil. When a man is ill, what Nature is really driving at is to kill him. That is the long and the short of the matter.'

And this amazed me even more than what his *confrères* had said.

Sir C. L. was once on his holiday in Italy many years ago, when he got a line by messenger from his old friend Lord A., then

residing near Milan: 'I know, my dear L., you do not exercise your profession in your vacation, but for the sake of old times I think you will come and see me. I am very ill, dying I believe, and nobody can find out what is the matter with me.' The good physician of course obeyed the summons. He found his lordship living in a lovely villa, in charge of a beautiful young woman, who spoke of his state of health with tears. He was certainly very ill, apparently dying of some irritant poison, though 'all the doctor's skill could not detect its nature. He had his suspicions, however, as to who administered it. One morning, when the lady was out on her usual ride, he took the liberty to go into her apartments and overhaul them thoroughly. On a shelf in the dressing-room he found a very delicate chopping instrument with infinitesimal bits of horsehair on it. Then he knew all about it. This horsehair was put into his lordship's food, and acted as a constant irritant. Sir C. went straight to him, and inquired whether he had made his will.

'Yes.'

'You have left this young lady a good deal of money, I conclude?'

'Yes, I have. But why do you ask?'

'Does she know it?'

'Yes, I have told her, poor dear.'

'Well, that poor dear is the person who is compassing your death'—and he produced the chopping machine. His lordship, after much argument, was convinced and deeply affected.

'Well,' said Sir C., 'let me send for a policeman.'

'A policeman! Certainly not. She has behaved ill, I grant, but she is an angel.'

'Let me at all events pack the angel off.'

'What, send the poor dear away! Impossible! I could not live without her. I am sure she will be very penitent and sorry.'

Sir C. had a long and most dramatic interview with her and found her very sorry—to have been found out. She promised not to do it again.

'If you do,' said Sir C., 'you will be hung, that I promise you. I shall keep my eye on Lord A., and if I hear of his illness or his death I will come, if it be a thousand miles, to investigate it, and if you have tried to murder him a second time I will not spare you.'

But the old lord and the young lady lived on together (as



in the fairy tales) very happily ever afterwards. In my novel 'Halves,' I have used this incident, though of course under wholly different circumstances.

This was, as I may be allowed to say since it was not my own, a very good plot, and it was not the only one for which I have been indebted to other people. As a rule, what one's friends consider as 'a capital subject for a novel,' and make one a present of with the air of bestowing something very valuable indeed, is absolutely useless ; but I have known exceptions, and the plot of the 'Confidential Agent,' as I have elsewhere said, was dreamt by a friend. My own dreams have been unfruitful, though there was a ghost story, 'The Prince,' which came to me lately during slumber, and frightened me far more than its readers. One plot I purchased. When I say plot, of course I mean some striking incident, which may not occupy ten lines, or two minutes in the telling, but which takes the fancy by storm. If it does not do that, it is valueless to the story-teller.

'By Proxy' was simply evolved from the idea of a man not performing a promise to his dead friend. It is, I believe, my most popular novel ; but though the local colouring has been pronounced accurate enough by residents in China, a great authority once informed me that though the populace would have torn the author of the sacrilege described to pieces, the mandarins would have taken no notice of it. When the villainy of the chief character was denounced as exaggerated and out of nature, on one occasion I remember my dear old friend, Sir Francis Doyle, observed, 'That is rubbish ; I know Pennycuik quite well.' And so did I, though it was not the same person.

Sir Francis was one of the most delightful old men I have ever known, and the kindest. How many times, weak and ill as he then was, has he climbed up my office stairs to tell me something that he knew would give me pleasure, or make me smile. He was a humourist and also a great lover of horses (as we all know from his fine poem on the Leger), which is, in my experience, a rather unusual combination. His last letter to me, too personal to be printed here, is very touching and characteristic. 'How false,' he says, 'is the notion that when we grow old, troubles no longer affect us as they used to do. I do not care for prolonged life ; and death, after having lived twenty-four years longer than Shakespeare, ought not to be dreaded.'

Another class of letters, which delicacy forbids me to publish,



are those which I have received in my capacity as editor from persons of both sexes to whom I have been able to extend a friendly hand. It cost me little, and has been repaid ten times over by their appreciation of it. If, as we are told, it is the part of a generous nature to magnify slight benefits, those who adopt the literary calling must indeed be graciously endowed. Some of these folks have been successful, and some have not, but they have equally remained my friends; in the former case, when they have surpassed me in fame and fortune, I may honestly say that no touch of jealousy has mingled with my congratulations, and in the latter, they have felt that I did my best for them and forbore to abuse the plaintiff's attorney. Some acts of theirs have been so touching, and have cast such a pleasant light on human nature, that (since it involves no breach of confidence) I cannot resist the pleasure of recalling them.

A correspondent of mine, to whom literature had been its own reward (and not a great one even at that), emigrated with his wife and family to California. I had never seen him, and never expected to hear from him again, for he had given up the pen for the pickaxe, and become a miner. When he had been six months away he sent me a registered letter, with quite a large lump of gold in it. 'When I left England,' he said, 'I privately promised myself to send you the first nugget I should find, and here it is.' My wife wears it, but not as a jewel; it seems to us set in something (though invisible) more beautiful and precious than pearls or diamonds.

Curiously enough I received from the same far-off land, and also from a miner, another gift, to which I attach an equal value. He had been thrown from his mule and became incapacitated from working, so had turned the natural gift he possessed for painting to that art. So great it was indeed, that though he had never received a lesson, the first picture (water colour) he sent to the Academy on his coming to England was accepted; but at the time in question he was well content to keep the wolf from his cabin door by selling his sketches to the miners. As a novel of mine had chanced to please him, when he was prostrated by his accident, he sent me a charming picture for illustration of a scene I had portrayed in it, and that too, I think, if it could be environed with the feelings that moved him to such an act, would become it better than the finest frame.

Another gift, or rather the offer of it, for I was fortunately

able to stop it *in transitu*, as it would have been obtaining goods under false pretences, has also a pretty history. In a certain American periodical, I had been writing some articles on birds' eggs, and for professional purposes had described myself as a crippled boy, whose only pleasure was in collecting them. The editor wrote to me that a fine collection of American eggs had been sent to his care, the property of an American boy (quite unknown to him), who being himself in health, felt that they would give me a greater pleasure than he took in them himself.

The strangest letter I ever received was from a person of no particular eminence, whom I should have thought incapable of exciting even so mild an emotion as surprise. I had known him from early years, but of late had seen very little of him. Thoroughly high principled, he was, however, rather conventional in his opinions, and to say truth somewhat uninteresting. Still, old association has its influence, and I was really glad to see Alfred Hunter's handwriting upon the envelope placed upon my breakfast table one morning. What he could have to write to me about, however, I could not conceive:—

‘Ilex Park, Yorkshire.

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is a very long time since we met, but I have not forgotten you. You have made your way in the world, and I do not doubt that you have deserved to do so, yet I dare say, to use rather a vulgar expression, you have had more praise than pudding. At all events money must be a consideration to you as to every one else, and therefore I make no apology for what follows, and it gives me sincere pleasure to have the opportunity of putting you on what our sporting friends when we were young and foolish used to call (I think) “a good thing.” The idea is my own, and has been divulged to nobody. With you alone, the friend of my youth, I wish to share it. It is nothing less than a grand scheme of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice (as Dr. Johnson puts it) by black-mailing. You and I know a number of persons of position, all of whom of course have committed themselves in some way or other; some perhaps criminally, if so so much the better. Let us worm ourselves into their confidence and extort hush-money. What do you say to starting a Limited Company (only you and me) for this purpose?’

Now Alfred Hunter never made a joke in his life, and if this was his first joke some excuse might be made for it; but there was

nothing funny about the letter except its extreme seriousness and the quotations, both of which were characteristic of him.

I did not feel at all inclined to reply to it, but called next day upon a cousin of his in the City, with whom I had a slight acquaintance. 'How is Alfred Hunter?' I said, after a little talk. 'Very well, the last time I heard of him,' he replied, I thought a little gravely. 'And prosperous I hope,' said I. 'He writes to me from some park in Yorkshire.' 'Good Heavens! don't you know?' inquired my companion. 'It's a lunatic asylum; poor Alfred has been in confinement these five years.'

I am aware that these reflections are dreadfully digressive, but that I cannot help. If I do not write down what happens to come into my mind at once, it is gone for ever; 'and no great loss' perhaps will be the reflection of the reader. When a man comes to the end of his life, and flatters himself that he is giving his fellow-creatures the experience of it, it often happens that he is only giving them the lees of the glass. What I was going to say some time ago, *à propos* of letters from literary persons, was that in these latter days they are from a literary point of view seldom worth reading, chiefly from their brevity. To paraphrase a famous line, 'their worst they give, their best they keep'—for printing purposes. The demand for their productions from the public is too great and pressing to admit of their favouring private friends beyond a genial word or two. Two generations ago this was not the case. Dickens, indeed, wrote letters as good as any of his books, and comparatively long ones, but he had a boundless store of ideas, and could afford to bestow them in all directions and as it were with both hands. George Eliot also wrote long letters to her correspondents—the dullest in the language; there are some unpublished ones lying before me, artificial, pompous, would-be philosophical, but unspeakably dull. She had no gift of letter-writing at all. It is amazing to compare her efforts (for they are full of effort) in this way with the ease and charm of an authoress like Miss Mitford, for example, with whom of course in other intellectual respects there can be no comparison; but Miss Mitford belonged to a literary generation which did write letters. Miss Martineau too wrote good ones, though of a very different sort. I have scores of the letters of both in my desk, only alike in that they are full of home kindness. Both those maiden ladies were essentially motherly women.

We hear a great deal about the difficulty young authors find

in getting a hearing, of the 'close boroughs' which all magazines of standing are sure to be, and of 'favouritism' in literature generally. This is a very old superstition, and at one time may have had some foundation in fact; but the thing complained of has not existed to any extent worth speaking of for a couple of generations. I can witness to its absence at least for forty years. Literary cliques there have of course always been, and will be to the end of time; mutual admiration societies very amusing to the old stager, but which offend the neophyte by their exclusiveness, and the great discouragement which they think it their duty to afford to all applicants for their assistance; but there is no more favouritism in periodical literature than there is sentiment in business. What an editor wants is a good article, and if he takes had ones out of friendship, he soon finds cause to repent it. He does not need advice, and still less objurgation upon this point; like Mr. Pickwick when he fell through the ice, and was entreated by Mr. Winkle to keep himself up for *his* sake, he follows the precept for his own. As regards myself—though thanks to my early acquaintance with Miss Mitford, as stated in my 'Literary Recollections,' I was personally introduced to several persons of eminence in Literature—it was no sort of use to me in getting employment. I knew no editor, nor anyone who had influence with editors; and though I have received great kindness from many of them, as regards advice, do not consider myself under obligations to them as regards acceptance; it would be a bad compliment indeed both to them and to me were it otherwise.

A dear friend, to whom I used to speak of this matter because it interested him, though he knew nothing about it, being a theologian, pure and simple, was the late Dean Burgon. He was a very old friend of my family, and was so good as to entertain a regard for me, far beyond my deserts, especially when judged from his own standpoint. He was one of those 'whose eyes grow tender over drowning flies,' yet believe in the harshest dogmas. His biographers, in extolling him as a theologian, have quite lost sight of his affectionate drollery, which had a charm of its own I have seen in no other man. His last letter to me, written within a few days of his death, and beginning 'My dear Jimmy,' is full of it. I have often described, though I believe not in print, a delightful scene in which he refused to christen a male child 'Venus.' It was when he was officiating as curate at West Ilsley in Berkshire. The people there were very primitive, and I remember

how the poor clerk got into hot water for giving out Rousseau's Dream to the parish choir; to him it was a mere piece of music innocent as Jacob's dream, but not so to Burgon. 'How dare you mention that horrid man and his nasty dream within these sacred walls, sir?' But the christening business was a still finer incident. 'Vanus?' I suppose you mean Venus. Do you imagine I am going to call any Christian child after that abandoned female, and least of all a male child?'

The father of the infant urged that he only wished to name it after his grandfather.

'Your grandfather!' cried Burgon. 'I don't believe it. Where is your grandfather?' He was produced: a poor old soul of eighty or so, bent double, and certainly not looking in the least like the goddess in question. 'Do you mean to tell me, sir, that any clergyman ever christened you Vanus, as you call it?'

'Well, no, sir; I was christened Sylvanus, but they always calls me "Vanus."'

How dear old Burgon enjoyed it! His tempest of indignation was stilled at once; and his queer face, always the gravest of the grave during an ecclesiastical ceremonial, puckered into an irresistible smile. He was the most natural man, despite his dogmatic opinions, I ever knew, and though he exceedingly magnified his priestly office, without the slightest affectation or pomposity, he loved children dearly, and was never tired of playing with them. There is a story told of him after he became a dignitary of the Church which, if it is not true, deserves to be so. Returning from his cathedral in full canonicals, he saw one of his juvenile playmates, as he thought, approaching him, and hiding behind a corner he came out with a cheerful 'Boo.' It turned out to be a little old widow lady, who very nearly had a fit on the spot, and could not be persuaded for many days that his reverence had not gone mad.

A well-known public favourite once gave an entertainment at Chichester, and being still in his bed the next morning at the hotel, was called upon by the Dean (a perfect stranger to him), who congratulated him upon his talents, and gave him several useful wrinkles for his future performances. Dean Burgon wrote the lives of 'twelve good men,' but I refuse to believe that any one of them could have been a purer, better, or more unselfish man than himself.

(To be continued.)

### *THE HAPPIEST MAN IN LONDON.*

THE doctor did not have an easy time of it in that East-End parish where he had bought a cheap practice and settled down with his youth, his aspirations, his skill, to fight the battle of life. His youth seemed to slip from him in his first year of work; his aspirations changed their nature; his skill developed. He acquired vast experience in those poor homes where he fought valiantly against disease, the result of intemperance and vice and poverty and ignorance—disease of which the victim was often an innocent sufferer. The sins of the fathers were visited upon infants—the sins of bygone generations on brave girls and well-meaning young fellows—the sins of children on patient women and hard-worked men. Dr. Murray was a thinker as well as a worker. He might have easily become morbid in that dreary place, where there was nothing beautiful to charm the mind, and little enough to charm the eye or the ear. But he did not become morbid. He had the remembrance of a happy country home where his boyhood had been passed; he had the thoughts of his dear old mother who lived there still, and the lessons she had taught the boy had not left him in his manhood; above all, he had thoughts of another woman—her letters, sometimes—the promise of herself before long. When he walked through the muddy street to his solitary house he did not let his mind dwell on the room he had just visited, where three children lay ill in one bed, shivering with cold, and with no one but a drunken mother to attend to them, and give them such food as was provided for the family by a lazy father whose earnings, scanty enough, were chiefly spent at the ‘Royal George.’ He did not let himself meditate on the details of his cases when he had left them; that would have unfitted him for his work. No; he tried to imagine what home would be like when Norah was really there, when the opening door would disclose her to him, coming out to welcome him and draw him into the warm room where there would be firelight and lamplight and—herself. He pictured her in a white robe, in a blue robe, in a robe of scarlet, just as the weather might suggest. He pictured the look of her sitting-room: the flowers—he never had flowers, but there must be flowers where Norah was. He pictured the



shining of her eyes, the smile on her lips, the flush on her cheeks. She was always bright, and always gentle, and always tender, and always well. To him health was beautiful, as it can only be to those who have the deformity wrought on mind and body by sickness constantly before them. The abundant life and vitality of the Irish girl were in themselves a charm to the somewhat stern young Scotchman. She brought warmth and light and sweetness to him, to his life, to Millwall. She brought that now. What would it be by-and-by—by-and-by—when——

He reached home. He let himself into the unlighted hall. The house felt cold. He set his lips together and thought, 'By-and-by.' He laid aside his umbrella, took off his coat, strode into the barely furnished, rather uncomfortable dining-room, and rang for dinner.

A middle-aged woman presented herself.

'Oh!' she said, 'I'm sorry the fire's out, sir.'

'Never mind,' said Murray, 'I shall have to go out again after dinner, I expect.'

'Oh! that reminds me, sir. An old gentleman come to see you. He wanted you to call upon his wife. But he said you wasn't to trouble to-night if so be you was tired.'

At this unwonted consideration for an individual who was supposed by the people about him to be quite independent of weariness of mind and body, to have no need of sleep, to require no time for meals, and to be always at the beck and call of every baby with bronchitis, every old woman with fits, and every boy with injuries, the doctor raised his eyebrows.

'Who was it, Mrs. Hawker?'

'He was unbeknown to me, sir; but he was a respectable-lookin' gentleman, quite clean, and a nice face to him—a bit of grey whisker, too.'

'Did he leave his name?'

'Yes; I laid it on your consultin'-room table. He pencilled it on the back of a envelope I had in my pocket. I'll bring it in with your chop.'

The chop made its appearance. It was a straggling, limp, purposeless-looking chop, sodden in the greasy water that passed for gravy, and accompanied by a viciously hard, yellow potato, the deadliness of which to any but the most perfect digestion was evident to the experienced doctor. He pushed it on one side, and attacked the chop, which exhibited a muscular development, a



firmness, or an obstinacy of which one might well have considered it incapable. However, the doctor again murmured, 'By-and-by,' and grappled with it so far as to dispose of a great quantity of the lean; the fat, which was of a bilious complexion, he left to its own devices, and it merged its existence in that of the gravy. The chop was followed by an apple tart. Mrs. Hawker called it an apple tart; but any respectable pastry would have shuddered at the mere suggestion of relationship. As to the apples, they were—well, the question was, 'Where *were* the apples?'

Dr. Murray felt himself justified in drinking a little of the whisky his mother had sent him. I am afraid he did not say his grace. Perhaps he was too honest a man for that.

Mrs. Hawker came to clear away. She bore a fragment of paper in her hand.

'I'd forgot this,' she said.

The doctor looked at it. In ill-formed but fairly legible letters he saw the words—

Please com at your convenience.

JOHN TEMPLE,

14 Plevna Street

(top)

It was not a cheerful night. But within!—what was there within? And every day must bring its duties. Besides that, 'at your convenience' was so delightfully agreeable after the usual messages that reached him. He went into the hall again, pulled on his coat, took his umbrella, put on his hat as badly as doctors usually do, and banged the front door behind him.

It was drizzling. The air was cold. The mud was sticky. There was neither moonlight nor starlight as yet. The feeble rays of the street lamps made but slight impression on the general darkness. There were several people about in the streets, however; they were so little less comfortless than their homes. Women shuffled by with shawls over their heads, sometimes babies at their breasts. Outside the public-houses, of which the doctor passed three in the short distance he traversed, stood groups of men (they were men with no work, and consequently no money, or they would have been inside); here and there boys and girls were playing in the corners. Their play was rough, noisy, unlovely. It was accompanied by much shrill screaming and some foul language.

By-and-by the doctor came to a narrow street which seemed to be less well lit, noisier, dirtier than those through which he had

already passed. He had several patients in this road, but he did not exactly know where 14 was. He went right up to the nearest door and peered; that was 11. He crossed over, presuming the numbers were odds and evens. He found 14.

His knock brought a fat, untidy woman to the door, and several dirty, large-eyed children into the hall. As the children and herself were at the time in the enjoyment of what they considered health, Mrs. Bickle did not feel it incumbent to be extra polite to the gentleman whom the light of the candle she held revealed to be the doctor. She knew him by sight. She said, 'Wal?' interrogatively.

'Mr. Temple,' said the doctor.

'Upstairs, please. Mr. Tem-ple—Mr. Tem-pill! The doctor to see yer.'

Mrs. Bickle held the candle, and she and the children watched the gentleman's ascent of the narrow, winding stair. The house being only two-storied, he had not far to go. Mr. Temple, who had apparently just started to meet him, stood waiting till he reached the top.

'Sir,' he said, 'I take this kind of you.'

Dr. Murray could not at first discern his face, but the tone of the voice struck him pleasantly. It seemed to accord with the 'at your convenience.'

'In here, please, sir.'

The man led the way into the room.

Dr. Murray had seen many of such rooms—rather, he had seen many much worse rooms. This was small; it gave evidence of poverty; it was barely furnished. But it was a bright room. Exactly why it gave the impression of brightness it was difficult to say: perhaps because Mr. Temple was in it. That was the conclusion the doctor came to afterwards.

There was a small fire in the grate. A lamp was on the round table. There was a chair—only *one* chair—which was put by the bedside. In the bed lay a woman. Mr. Temple introduced her briefly: 'My wife.'

The woman turned her eyes in the direction of the doctor. That was her recognition of his presence.

'I thought I'd like you to step round and have a look at her,' said Mr. Temple. 'I've feared she isn't quite so well to-day. There ain't much the matter, is there, Lucy?' but I fancied it'd be a comfort to me if you'd see her.'

When Mr. Temple said there wasn't much the matter, it has to be borne in mind that he had been wont to see her for five-and-twenty years like this.

'She had a stroke, and she has been paralysed ever since,' said Mr. Temple simply.

He did not speak in a particularly sad voice, or as if he pitied her or himself. The doctor looked at Mrs. Temple.

It would have been difficult to say what her age might have been, she was such a wreck of a woman. She was, as a matter of fact, ten years younger than her husband, and he was going on for seventy. She was perfectly helpless. She could not move any part of her body without aid; she had even lost the use of her hands. Her face was drawn to one side by the paralysed muscles, and thus distorted was bereft of any beauty it might have possessed. Speech was difficult to her, and the few words she uttered were scarcely articulate. There was no light nor colour in her face; only her eyes showed that she was a living woman. They looked straight out, blue and clear and shining, vivid against the parchment skin, the scant white hair.

'I fancy,' said Mr. Temple, 'she's had a bit of a chill. Do what I will, this room's draughty, and she naturally feels the cold. She never complains, but I know she feels the cold. Don't you, Lucy?'

She muttered something.

'Yes,' said Mr. Temple, 'she does. You may be sure if she owns to it there's reason. The only thing we ever quarrel about is that she won't ever say what ails her, unless I worry it out. She's an obstinate woman is Lucy.'

The idea of applying such a word to the poor creature would have seemed ludicrous to the doctor if it hadn't been for Temple's tone and the look in the eyes of his wife as she turned them in the direction of the old man.

They always were turned in his direction when he was in the room. That was one of the things the doctor found out before very long.

'Who attends to her?' he inquired, when he had asked Temple a few questions and written a prescription.

'Why, I do, sir,' said Temple. 'I wouldn't let anyone else touch her.'

'Do you mean you do everything?'

'Why, yes, sir. Who should if not me? She's my wife. I

used to be a bit clumsy at first, but I've had time to learn. I manage pretty fair now, don't I, Lucy ?'

Again the grateful, devoted eyes shone upon him. The doctor had seen how a woman could look when she loves. There were times when the remembrance of shining, long-lashed, upturned eyes thrilled him almost to pain, but—would Norah ever look at him like *that* ?

He cleared his throat before he spoke again. 'But you go to work. What then ? Is she alone ?'

'Why, she is, sir, so to speak. I wouldn't leave her if I could help it. But I always commend her to the Lord before I go out, and He ain't never failed us yet.'

The doctor had a man's hatred of cant ; but he had sufficient insight by now into the character of those with whom he dealt to know that these words were as simple and sincere as those which had preceded them.

'I get up early of a morning, you see, sir,' said Temple, 'and make our breakfasts and attend to her. Then before I start for work—I'm in an engineer's employ—I just boards her up in bed so as she can't fall out. I'm back at dinner-hour, and we have it together. Then, when I leave work, my evenin' soon passes. There's usually a bit of cooking to be done, and washing up, and the room to be seen to. A invalid must have things clean about her ; it isn't agreeable to just lie and look at anything dirty. I like Lucy to keep bright—but there ! she always is ; and if occasionally she gets down I soon cheer her up, don't I, Lucy ? Me and Sunny together. Sunny—that's our bullfinch. He's asleep now, covered up, you see, and I won't disturb him. But by day he's that lively ! He chirps and talks away to Lucy ; he's company for her, Sunny is, bless his little heart !'

He told the story of his great unselfish life without any idea that it was either the one or the other. Indeed, he would have been surprised if the doctor had followed his inclination to wring his hand and tell him he was proud to make his acquaintance. And the doctor did not know the extent of his self-sacrifice. He could not, even if he had known, realise at once what it meant to the tired working-man to rise early in the cold winter mornings that everything might be ready for the day before he started off ; the room was tidied, the fire was lit, the breakfast was made, and Lucy fed, before he touched a morsel. Other men have their wives to attend to them, roughly perhaps, but to some extent

kindly. Temple, however, received no help. He even did some of the washing that money might be saved from the laundress. He gave Lucy little luxuries. When she had beef-tea he ate the tasteless meat, from which all the nourishment had been extracted ; and he enjoyed it the more the more tasteless it was, for then he knew it was likely the beef-tea was good. If she protested, it was useless ; she had given up protesting long ago. He did it, and she took it, as a matter of course. But she was not ungrateful.

His reward ? Ah, he had his reward. He loved her better than he had ever done in her days of youth and health and beauty. And what does true love ask but the opportunity to serve ? And she ? What she felt for him it would take a better pen than mine to describe ; rather, I defy any pen to describe it. I believe even the angels who looked into that garret could not understand it, for angels do not suffer nor need the tender ministry of man. They do not know what it is to be a burden where one fain would be a burden-bearer, and yet to find not gloom nor reproaches but chivalrous devotion. Only He who gave the heart of woman its needs and its powers could have understood how this one regarded her husband—He, and here and there another woman made wise by suffering.

The doctor went away with a promise to call the next day. Mrs. Temple's indisposition was so slight that it was evident her husband must have observed her very closely to have noticed its symptoms. As a matter of fact, the sympathy between them was so intense that he seemed always to divine her thoughts and sensations. She seldom spoke, and her hearing was slightly affected. But they scarcely needed the medium of speech ; and speech is inadequate to express the highest feelings. Those who are privileged to taste the supreme joys of existence keep silence.

When Dr. Murray had gone, the old man got ready for the night. He was obliged to retire early whenever possible. He brought warm water to the bedside and washed the hands and face of his wife, and tied on her white night-cap. In the morning he would perform her toilet again, and do her hair for her. And he took pride in doing it, as he said, 'as stylishly as a hairdresser.' Then he arranged on the chair, so as to be within reach, a candle in a tin candlestick, a glass of water, and a biscuit. After that he fetched a large Prayer Book and the Bible, and read the Psalms and the second lesson for the evening, and afterwards prayed. He thanked God for the many mercies vouchsafed to them that

day, for food and power to work, and for a home. He remembered those without these blessings, and begged that they might receive them. He commended himself and his wife to God's keeping throughout the night.

Then his day was over. In the night Mrs. Temple was thirsty. She did not disturb her husband; but he awoke, lit the candle, and held the glass of water to her lips.

Dr. Murray kept his promise to call. He got into the habit of looking in on the old couple pretty frequently. He wrote and told Norah about them, and one day she sent Mrs. Temple some flowers, and the simple act gave such happiness that it was repeated, and during the winter the garret was never without a chrysanthemum or two. The stalks would be cut and the water changed till the flowers were dead; they were never thrown away till there was not a petal left. For Mrs. Temple it was impossible for the doctor to have any feeling but sympathy, but for the old man he conceived a positive affection. His unvarying good spirits, his pluck, his beautiful mind, his simple intelligence, and his unaffected piety had an effect on the doctor which resulted in reverence. And the old fellow loved him. He saw so few people that it was a great pleasure to have some one to talk to who was as well informed and interesting as the doctor. But no familiarity ever lessened his respectful attitude towards the man he considered one of his 'betters.' The only time when they came to any danger of a quarrel was when Temple broached the subject of payment. The doctor refused to send in a bill.

'Sir,' said Temple, 'I asked you to call, and I mean to pay you for your time and trouble. If so be you'll look in friendly we shall be honoured, sha'n't we, Lucy? But when you come professional you must be treated as such.'

The doctor protested, but Temple was firm. 'Sir,' he said (he usually began his sentences with this term of respect), 'I can't pretend to be a rich man, but I know I can afford to pay you as well as many poor folks you attend. You get your living through attending to the poor, and it can't be agreeable work always, and it's right you should be paid. Besides, there is that dear young lady to be considered. No, sir; let me have your bill and settle it honest. If the day come when I couldn't, then it 'ld be time enough for me to receive charity.'

And so the doctor sent in a very modest bill, and it was duly paid. But he made a point afterwards of always giving it to



be clearly understood that his visits were 'friendly.' And indeed he could do nothing for Mrs. Temple. All that medical skill could do for her had been tried long ago.

But the doctor could see that the chill she had had was the forerunner of a gradual decline. To say she grew more helpless would be scarcely consistent with truth, but it was evident she was failing. Her interest in things seemed to flag. She lay for hours with her eyes closed. She took less food. Sometimes Temple had to finish the beef-tea himself or eat the grapes, and they tasted bitter in his mouth. But he gave no sign that he thought her worse; and indeed the change was so gradual as to be almost imperceptible.

The spring came. There were no more fogs. Even here the subtle spirit of hope penetrates. The air was sweet in the early morning when Temple went to his work. He would sing as he walked. Sunny's cage was put near the window, and he chirped to his mistress. He told her that the sky was blue, that somewhere the fields were decked with cowslips, that violets were blowing in the woodland places, that the trees were murmuring together as they decked themselves in young green leaves. All this was pleasant to think of, but it was pleasanter to think that John would soon be home. When Sunny chirped loudest she knew the time was drawing nearer. Perhaps she thought of other things; for she and John talked together sometimes of the country to which by-and-by they would go, and where there shall be no pain. She was not in a hurry to go. She was happy here, for love had given her a foretaste of Heaven. But she was ready to start; and they had sent a little messenger to await them thirty years ago. She had thought then the time would be long before she saw the child again, but John had made it short for her.

The spring brought hope to the doctor. He knew that Mrs. Hawker's reign was drawing to an end, and that the 'by-and-by' would soon be here. It had been a hard winter. Strikes had brought added poverty to many a home, and the infant sickness and mortality had been terrible. And then there had been the influenza! But he had battled on, working all day and sometimes half the night, and kept himself brave with the thought of Norah. And now it was April. And on the first of June!

He called on the Temples before he went away. They had



known that his marriage was approaching, but not exactly the date of it.

'I am going off for a month,' he said to John. Then reddening, 'When I come back I hope to bring another friend to see you.'

'Sir!' The old man looked at him. Then, grasping his meaning, held out his rough yet gentle hand.

'God *bless* you, sir! You couldn't tell me anything that would make me more rejoiced. The dear young lady! We seem to know her now, already, but we shall really see her, and love her, I am sure.'

'Oh, yes,' said Murray, 'you'll love her, Mr. Temple. Everybody does.'

'Lucy, did you hear? The doctor is going to fetch the dear young lady.'

The woman unclosed her eyes. She looked at the doctor, and the drawn face seemed flooded with sweetness. Her lips moved.

'She says "God bless you," sir. Lucy says "God bless you." And when *she* says it she means it. Ah, we know what a blessed thing married life can be, don't we, Lucy? It's a solemn fact, sir, to take a woman to be your wife. It's a solemn fact. But when the blessing of God rests upon a union marriage is a sacrament that brings you added grace. It is, sir. Your faith grows, and your love grows, and your nature deepens. You learn a many things. I'm old and I've lived, but the part of my life that has helped me to the best knowledge is—just that. I took Lucy. I said I'd "love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health." I've tried, and we've been happy. Sir, love does it all. You'll want to comfort her, you'll have to honour her, and if sickness come you'll love her all the more.'

From the bed there came a strange sound. It was something between a laugh and a sob. And the doctor turning, looked away again. Her husband's words had moved the wife to tears, but her face was radiant with the joy in her upturned eyes.

Temple laid his hand on hers—hers which could give no answering pressure. 'Sir,' he said, 'I can't wish you better happiness than I've had. I wish you as much. And I take it I'm about the happiest man in London.'

## CHARACTER NOTE.

### THE BEAUTY.

'La beauté trompe encore plus la personne qui la possède que ceux qui en sont éblouis.'

LENA is seven-and-thirty years old. She is the best-dressed woman in London. 'And the best-looking,' she adds judiciously and with the candour for which she is distinguished. She has a house in Park Lane. She has a villa on the Riviera of which she is immensely fond—when she is in England; and a great estate in the coal country, which she always hates. She is of the world, worldly. She is so shallow and brilliant that one feels she ought to make a great name. She knows something about everything. She reads before she comes down in the morning, during the prolonged rest she always takes for the benefit of her perfect complexion. She reads theology when theology is the fashion. She is a Buddhist one week and a Mahatma the next. An Agnostic pretty frequently. Agnosticism is so convenient. She talks over her beliefs with her admirers. There is a point and audacity about her statements which make them infinitely more telling than if they were the soundest of arguments. No one argues with her, however. Her beauty, her perfect poses, her wit, her brilliancy, her fine sense of humour, her complete vanity and self-satisfaction, make argument in some sense impossible. The laugh is always with her. To put her in the wrong is quite out of the question. 'She is so confoundedly clever, you know,' some one says of her. That is it. She is so confoundedly clever.

Her beauty is perfectly preserved. An excellent digestion, and a heart and conscience which have given her no sort of trouble, have contributed to this desirable result. 'I shall be thirty-eight next birthday,' she is in the habit of saying with the most delightful candour. 'And I should be constantly mistaken for my own daughter if I were not so very much better looking.' Her vanity is as transparent as that of a child admiring itself in a new frock in a looking-glass. It is, as it were, the weak point in a character that is otherwise strong. Lena will lap up greedily the most fulsome of compliments. There is no flattery too blunt for her

ear. Her pride and her cleverness cringe to it. Her worship of her own beauty would be ridiculous if it did not strike a note that reverberates in tragedy. To be lovely and admired has been the whole aim of her life. She has sacrificed her soul to it, and achieved it.

Lena was married at nineteen. 'I was the handsomest girl in London,' she says to her husband, looking at him with perfect scorn and good-humour down a table glittering with glass and silver. 'I might have married anybody. And I married you.'

Her husband does not answer. He seldom replies to Lena's innuendoes. He has a habit of sitting with his hands crossed behind his chair, and his grey head a little bent. He is a fool, of course. What could he have been but a fool to think that Lena, brilliant and nineteen, could be marrying him for anything except his money? What can he be now but a fool to go on worshipping this woman who insults him a dozen times a day with her scornful good-humour and her cruel wit? The world—the world always knows—says he has only himself to blame for her treatment of him. The world scorns scarcely less than she does herself his slow patience and long-suffering, his persistent kindness and forbearance. 'My husband has no brains to speak of, you know,' says Lena conversationally. Her husband can hear the remark from the other end of the table. 'He wrote a prize poem at Cambridge,' she continues, enjoying herself very much. 'That speaks for itself.' Lena is wearing diamonds which this fool gave her a week ago. Her bad taste is sometimes so execrable that one wonders even society applauds her. 'It's a dreadful shame,' people say, and accept her invitations to dinner next month with perfect pleasure. But there is indeed something about Lena which leads the world, as well as her husband, to forgive her. It may be her wit, or her beauty, or her manner which makes some women and all men lose sight of, or care nothing for, the nature which they cover. Or it may be that even Lena is not so bad as she represents herself.

There is good in her. There is a certain impulse and generosity which would be very good if they were not so exceedingly brief. There are days and moments when Lena is quite pleasant and civil to the man who has married her, and given her great wealth, great faithfulness, great affection. The day he brings her home the diamonds she is surprised into pleasure and gratitude. 'You can kiss me if you like,' she says. And he is fool enough to touch

her cheek reverently with his lips. She wears the diamonds all day for nearly a week. Her pleasure over them is like the pleasure of a child. She tries them first in this position and then in that. She looks at herself in all the mirrors in the drawing-room. They dine alone in the evening, and she is wholly gracious, and brilliant, and good-humoured. She has put on her very finest dress. She has made the maid do her hair a hundred times. 'Diamonds suit me exactly,' she says; 'and there isn't one woman in ten thousand who ought ever to put them on.' She has taken up palmistry, and she reads her husband's character from his hand with entire good-nature. Her beauty is so rich and perfect, one cannot believe that she is nearly forty years old. When she is good-humoured, as she is to-night, she looks younger than ever. Her dress is inimitably chosen and suitable. She affects none of the airs of a very young woman. She is too confoundedly clever, you know, for that.

But the next day she is less gracious; and in a week is herself again.

Lena has a few occasional plain lady friends, whom she loves passionately for a month and loathes for the rest of her life. She has admirers. Everyone admires her. She has so little heart, that her only danger from their society lies in her most gullible vanity.

It is in society that she shines most. She is incomparably brilliant and amusing. She will question the theology of an archbishop with the easiest wit and audacity across a great dinner-table of persons who pause in their talk to listen to and look at her. She is the central figure everywhere she goes. Her candour and frankness are inimitable. Her vanity is of its kind perfect, and she is always comfortably assured that every man in the room is in love with her.

Her daughter, who is about seventeen years old, usually goes about with her. The contrast between the two is exceedingly effective, and wholly in Lena's favour. The daughter is a feeble and nervous imitation of Mamma, and very much afraid of that lady's sarcasm and brilliancy. Lena, indeed, is very little troubled by maternal instincts. She appropriates her daughter's lovers with a delightful aplomb and brilliancy. She is a hundred times better dressed and better looking than this girl. 'I have more brains, my dear Mabel,' she is in the habit of saying, 'in my little finger than you have in your whole head.'

When Mabel has been married for a few years and is defying Mamma from a safe distance, Sir George falls ill. The illness is

alarming; it even alarms Lena. In the very middle of the season she goes down to the coal country to nurse her husband. She puts on a very becoming cap and a delightful apron. She is for a time quite attentive and good-natured. She cheers the patient with the most deliciously scandalous and piquant stories which she has heard in town. The sick man always lies so that he can see her. She has done her best to break his heart, and he loves her still. The touch of her hand raises in him now a thousand tender emotions. She is still the one woman in the world for him. And she leaves him. The deadly dullness of the place and the monotony and depression of a sick-room soon get intolerable. She has always been quite selfish. Admiration is the breath of her life. And who is there to admire one in the coal country? She goes back to town, and a telegram informs her of his death.

She laments him and curses herself passionately for a few days. But there is the estate to see about, and one's black, and all sorts of things. It is a relief to her—it would be to any woman so placed—that a modern widow is not required to make herself wholly frightful. 'I am not sure that black is not more becoming to me than anything else,' she says. The fact affords her a great deal of consolation.

She soon resumes her usual mode of life. She is more admired than ever. She is a very rich widow indeed. Her style deteriorates perhaps. But that does not matter. Her admirers are not too particular.

And then she falls ill herself. It is not a common illness; it does not affect her brain or incapacitate her body; it only destroys her beauty. She goes to the best physicians in London and abroad. She tries quackery. She spares herself no trouble or money. While she is going through treatment she shuts herself up in the great house in the coal country. For a while she almost despairs. She reads a great many French novels, and tries desultorily, and with little of her former splendid vigour and brilliancy, a new religion. And she hears of a doctor, a great specialist for diseases of the skin, whom she has not yet seen. She flings aside the new religion and puts herself under his treatment. It is irksome always and sometimes painful; but she carries it out with a courage and resolution not ignoble. She suffers, and not a complaint passes her lips. She has never been a weak woman. She is not weak now. And her whole happiness and success in life are at stake.

One afternoon when she has been sitting, bored to death, looking above her novel through the window at the dripping autumn garden, the great doctor is announced unexpectedly.

'Doctor!' she exclaims. 'How good of you to look me up! I should have gone melancholy mad if you hadn't come! This is the most hateful place in all England. How much will you give me for it?'

She has still her old vivacity and the manner of a beautiful woman. She is perfectly dressed, and in the creeping shadows of the November afternoon, with her face half hidden by her white hand, one might fancy her lovely still. A flicker of firelight falls on her hair now and then, and it looks shining, like gold.

'I have been studying your case, Madam,' says the doctor. He is comparatively young and eager in his profession. He looks straight at Lena as he speaks.

'Well?' she says. She sits down at the tea-table, which is placed near the fire, and alters the position of some cups. The china clatters a little in her hands. 'It is not well, I fear,' he answers not easily and after a while. 'I have come here for a purpose, Madam. I have made up my mind—I think it right to tell you—that I can do nothing more for you. Your case is incurable.' Without, there is a wail of wet wind; within, a burning coal drops on the hearth, blackens, and dies out.

'It's a lie!' she cries suddenly. 'It's a lie!' And she turns upon him in a rage.

After a while he leaves her. She believes him. Perhaps she believed at first. The short twilight fades very quickly—the fire almost goes out. One last flame shows, haggard and terrible, the face which she used to say with some sort of justice was the most beautiful in London. 'An horror of great darkness' covers her at last.

'If I were a woman in a book,' she whispers, 'I should kill myself; but in real life I shall go on living, and living for ever.'

And her head falls upon her hands.

## SCENERY.

THE wisdom of our ancestors is nowhere seen to be more unquestionable than in the sentence, 'There is no accounting for tastes.' It is not merely that 'what is one man's meat is another man's poison,' for doctors might be able to tell us why under special conditions of health or disease certain drugs and viands suit the needs of different people. Constitutions vary. What fits a particular age, employment, or climate is unfitted for another. The same man, too, finds that a diet which agrees with him in a cold country must be discontinued in a hot one, and that if he can drink, say, beer, when taking strong exercise out of doors, he cannot touch it without discomfort while living a sedentary life in town. Under different circumstances the same food is wholesome or pernicious. But there is no accounting for tastes in regard to the flavour of what we eat and drink.

This difference in perception and enjoyment is notable also if we try to define the effect produced by what we 'see,' and ask e.g. the secret of the beneficial pleasure given by what is called 'beautiful scenery.' It really would often seem to come from 'change' of scene rather than from its intrinsic beauty. Thousands go every year to Switzerland for refreshment or inspiration. They bring old muscles into play, breathe a fresher air, and some not only climb peaks and glaciers but sketch or paint them. There is, indeed, to the dwellers in a region of level fields and green grass a peculiar sense of recreation in merely looking at uplifted masses of ice and snow, pure in their whiteness, or tinted with the colours of a setting sun, especially when cut off from earth by a line of cloud and showing in the heavens like a New Jerusalem. But what is the effect of all this glory upon those who have witnessed it from generation to generation? There is, I imagine, hardly a Swiss who would not exchange Mont Blanc for an equal bulk of the last patent manure, and if his hut happens to command the loveliest prospect in his land, does not set a dung heap in the foreground of his view, and keep his windows shut so tight that (when asleep, at least) he breathes an air as sour and close as any in a Shoreditch garret. Where is the long-drawn influence of



Alpine atmosphere and inspiring scenery on the native possessor of these charms? He is a pattern of thriftiness, brave as a lion, and certainly as strong as a horse, since he and his ancestors have been used to carry heavy burdens up and down hill time out of mind; but what mountaineer ever troubled himself about the view from the Matterhorn till he was paid to ascend it? People may talk of the home-sickness of the Swiss, but no nation has provided more hirelings eager to sell their services away from their own land as waiters and mercenary soldiers. The proverb says, 'No money, no Swiss.' It is the marked 'change' which their surroundings provide to dwellers on the flats that gives its recreative power to such a country as Switzerland and kindles the brains and bodies of visitors with new life. The barrenness and inaccessibility of the peak draw the stranger to gaze and climb, but drive away the native in search of a flatter and fatter soil. While at home, moreover (I think of residence in the heart of the picturesque), he displays no refined effect of its inspiration, but spends the long dark evenings of winter in making tobacco-stoppers and nut-crackers, or carving little chamois after the same pattern, the summer being devoted to the production of milk and cheese, except when he is engaged in the lodgment or guidance of enraptured visitors. They rejoice in a month's perception of the recreating influences which surround him, but the result of their continuous and focal impression upon himself contradicts the proverb that 'you cannot have too much of a good thing.'

The supposed power of conventionally beautiful surroundings may be tested elsewhere. Look, i.e. at those two uniquely distinguished countries, Phœnicia and Palestine. One has given letters, the other religion, to Europe and America. Their natural features, however, are not inspiring, or even exceptionally remarkable. It was the mysterious wind which 'bloweth where it listeth' that touched the souls and brains of their inhabitants and made them leaders in letters and faith. It might be remarked, too, that the man-made city, not the God-made country, has produced the great masters of thought in science and art. It is not your rustic, though set in the midst of nature's beauties, who commands the world, for his very name suggests an inferiority of perception and intellect. What does the glory of the sunrise tell the peasant except that it is time for him to go to work? And when the day closes in magnificent splendour he hails it as a release from toil, enabling him presently to go to bed. There

must be some depressing truth in the familiar line, 'Every prospect pleases, but only man is vile.'

But without for a moment imputing baseness to the honest son of the soil who sows and reaps the harvests of the world, it might be asked what it is that constitutes the 'beauty of nature.' There is an undefinable something in a landscape combining water and wood, hill and dale, the near meadow and the distant mountain, within the field of its vision, which touches the perceptive mind with grateful sense. Thus the rich man builds his house in some carefully chosen spot whence by merely looking out of his window he can fill his envied eyes with a lovely sight. And the tourist who for months has seen no steeper slope than that of Cornhill packs his Gladstone bag with eager appetite for 'scenery' which he thinks will blot out the impression of asphalt, omnibuses, and advertisement hoardings. When arrived at his mountain 'pension' or Windermere Hotel he gazes around him with a feeling that he has done the right thing, and on his return crows over his friend who has only tanned himself at Margate in the company of donkey-riding cockneys and blackened melodists. But possibly the owner of an accessible and enchanting site appreciates it most when it commands a good 'let,' and if the tourist has been followed by exacting letters, or (in the case of the 'pension') forgotten his dinner pills, or sprained his ankle during an unaccustomed walk, he wishes he had taken a lodging at Hampstead or stuck to the stones. He longs to find himself once more on the top of a Bayswater 'bus. His eye has seen only what it had the power of seeing, and all the loveliness of nature cannot pluck out of it the mote brought by that troublesome blue envelope, or stone he stumbled over. Unless a man has some definite object in view, whether to climb special peaks, bring home sketches and photographs, catch salmon, kill something, or find a certain butterfly or orchid, I doubt if the mere aimless vague staring at a 'fine view' (except so far as this is supplemented by the taking of wholesome exercise and breathing fresh air) leaves any precious mark upon his being, deepens his perception of the natural fitness of things, or quickens the sense with which he apprehends the wonders of creation.

Perhaps, indeed, it is when they are seen on a small scale rather than a large one that we best realise the beauties and works of nature. In any and every case these come from the operation of some law. Mountains are disintegrated, lakes formed,

rivers diverted, forests raised by the slow pressure of force which acts after an orderly way, and thus the mixed features of a 'lovely' landscape are really the result of supreme procedure. But so are the most 'repellent.' Both come from the working of 'a law which cannot be broken.' We do not, however, perceive the fitness of its procedure. The field of our vision is too limited for us to take it in. We see only a disjointed fragment of a mighty whole and feel ourselves unable to realise or admire the 'order' which has been followed in its production. But when our attention is drawn to its result on a small scale, as seen in the structure of a snowflake, crystal, or flower, we can take in the beauty of a form which reveals the wonder of creation.

For then we seem to see the pulse of life which fills its veins. Though the keenest scientific explorer who tabulates the movements of the cosmos (noting accurately the foreseen moment when a shadow begins to creep across the face of the sun) cannot fix the date or way in which life began to do its work, he can watch it operating in the world of insignificance when he puts a tiny drop crowded with germs upon the slide of his microscope. In the growth of a crystal too he sees the working of that same force which slowly changes the surface of the earth and guides the invisible planets which may be revolving around a million stars. And when he thus beholds the order of nature he is conscious of being impressed after a fashion never felt in gazing at the fairest landscape, for he has under his eye a moving revelation of that hidden power which shapes the world and all its manifold contents. It is on a small rather than a large scale that we can best realise the perfection which marks the work of the Creator. In saying this I think of 'things on the earth,' or what we mostly mean when we talk of 'scenery.' To the astronomer, that of the heavens reveals the divine order with an accuracy unrealised directly he takes his eye from the telescope and looks at the world around him. And to the simplest of us (who may not know the name of a single star) the punctual rising of the sun, and the changing size of the moon, tell him day by day and night by night of a law so sure that the very minute of its operation can be printed for a whole year in his penny almanac.

But even this grand procedure needs a seeing eye for its apprehension. One thinks of a picture in an old 'Punch' where Edwin and Angelina are seen gazing at a starlit sea. She is deeply impressed by the scene, but he breaks her silence with the

appropriate remark, 'By Jove, there is a fellow swimping. We'll have some pwawns for bweakfast to-mowow.'

With regard to 'beautiful scenery,' though we may be unable to perceive the operation of the order which has resulted in producing it, if we set about creating it (after a limited fashion) for ourselves, we employ an expert. We send for a 'landscape gardener' who is supposed to know the secrets of the law which provides an agreeable view. He has been taught how to combine those attractive features which please the eye. So he digs a pond here and makes a bank there. He cuts down one tree and plants another. He opens a vista through a wood and lays down a bare field with grass. He causes the paths which traverse our garden or domain to take acceptable curves, and if he knows his business he will be careful to follow such as are set by the lines of an ellipse or a parabola, scrupulously tracing these out with pegs and string. When he does, this part of his work at any rate is done with a gratifying recognition of natural laws, and he wins the unwitting approbation of his employer, who praises the genius which produces such graceful turns in the roads about his place. Possibly he remarks (for he must have some shred of opinion to be called his own), 'I almost think that there might be a few more shrubs planted on that bank, and couldn't you manage another island in the lake? But I must congratulate you on having, devised such a beautiful arrangement of my walks.' Lucky expert! He has had the wit to see the value of one or two unalterable laws, and pockets his cheque with a smile as he blesses himself for having thought about the pegs and string.

In regard to the perception of 'scenery' enjoyed in these days of rapid movement, I am inclined to think that (in the case of home 'trippers' who run about their own land) they cannot appreciate its beauties half so well as those in old time who travelled leisurely on foot, or on horseback, by the 'waggon,' or even outside a stage-coach. They could look about them with ease. Those pilgrims e.g. who made their deliberate chatty progresses through the country to one shrine or another (and there were far more who moved about then than many realise now) saw what was to be seen much better than people bustled into a train and whisked through clouds of dust and smuts from Charing Cross to Ramsgate, even though, by the way, they may put their heads out of window to look at Canterbury Cathedral. True, there is the unchanging sea to be gazed at for a few hours when they have

given up their tickets, but they must not miss the return evening train, though they please themselves by thinking (when they get back) that they have 'seen so much' for only half-a-crown.

Thus a 'Bank Holiday,' coming four times in a year, is a scanty substitute for many 'holy' days, and the 'feast,' once joyously observed throughout the villages of the realm, is supplanted, too often, by the projection of a heated crowd from one set of public-houses to another, and the thought of 'worship' as forming any part of the day's enjoyment never enters the mind of the holiday-maker who sips at his bottle of gin as he sits in the stuffy third-class excursion train.

Let it not be supposed for a moment that I would have it taken off the line, or deny the worker his flying chance of escape from the sordid court in which he lives or exacting factory in which he toils, but I would plead that in the pursuit of 'knowledge' (supposed to mark this age) the study of 'repose' is woefully forgotten. The 'beautiful scenery' through which the excursionist is whirled cannot be apprehended without some amount of deliberation. A 'lovely view' is not to be imbibed with the readiness displayed in drinking a pot of beer.

Well were those friends of London children advised who started a 'Country Holiday Fund,' whereby the parents of the poorest are enabled to send them away into the green fields, not for a few hours of screaming romps (acceptable enough to urchin taste), but a whole fortnight of rustic experience, from which they come back well tanned and with a perception of country life and ways impossible to the child who spends a day in a field (furnished with Aunt Sallies, knock-'em-downs, merry-go-rounds, and swings, and peopled with importunate donkey boys and itinerant photographers) into which he is good-naturedly taken with a view to his enjoyment of rural surroundings and at least a glimpse into the tranquillity of village innocence.

Many lamentations have been made over the way in which steam thrusts its iron finger into the most celebrated regions of 'beautiful scenery.' It is not merely that our railways are hedged with somebody's 'liver pills' and other supports of life, but when the sun rises he is no longer surprised to see a snorting reptile creep up the slopes of the Rigi, or at being used (for the encouragement of tourists) to photograph the spread of its breed by the thrifty Swiss. Theological speculation must be left to imagine what the architect of the 'Devil's Bridge' thinks about

St. Gothard's tunnel. But, after all, those who knew the Alps in former days should not be too hard upon the engine which drags a crowd of sightseers through scenes once enjoyed by only a privileged few, though he may well resent a modern Alpine fashion which would make him hesitate about sitting down to dinner in his shooting-jacket when he reaches a mountain inn whose passages are choked with bandboxes, dressing-bags, and huge American trunks. What impressions are carried away by some of our friends who 'do' Europe? One thinks of the young lady, with confused memories, who said to her mother: 'Ma. Rome?—what was it we looked at there?' 'Oh, my dear, don't you recollect? That is the place where we saw a woman shaving a dog.'

### *BANK OF ENGLAND NOTES.*

To the careless observer there does not appear to be very much difference between a Bank of England note of the present day and one of those which were first printed towards the close of the seventeenth century; but when carefully examined it will be found that the present issue is, as regards the quality of the paper and the improved character of the engraved writing, a much more remarkable production. The fact is, the Bank of England and some of the cleverest criminals have been running a race—the Bank to turn out a note which might defy the power of the forger to imitate it, and those nimble-fingered and keen-witted rascals to ‘keep pace’ with the Bank.

About the year 1820 a great outcry was raised against the Bank of England for not adopting a style of note which could not be imitated, so as to prevent the sad sacrifice of life which at this period was rapidly becoming of common occurrence, the punishment for forgery being death. The subject at last assumed so pressing a character that the Government appointed Commissioners to investigate the causes of the numerous forgeries, and whether a mode could be devised whereby the manufacture of counterfeit bank-notes might be, if not effectually prevented altogether, at least made an exceedingly difficult operation.

Previous to this investigation the directors of the Bank had been endeavouring to remedy the evil, many plans having been from time to time submitted to them by various experts, all of which, however, they were obliged ultimately to reject. At one time they were on the point of actually adopting a curious and very costly machine for printing the note on both sides so identical in every respect as to appear but one impression, when a workman who had evidently been carefully considering the merits of the proposed project came forward and proved by practical demonstration before the members of the committee that the same thing might be done by the simple contrivance of two plates connected by a hinge. Altogether the Bank placed before the Commissioners one hundred and eighty different schemes which had been recommended for their adoption, and seventy varieties of paper made at their manufactory by way of experiment, in which almost every



alteration suggested for adoption had been tried. The result of these laborious experiments and investigations was the bank-note of the present day. The notes now in use are, in fact, the most elaborately manufactured 'bits of paper' imaginable. The paper alone is remarkable in many ways—notably for its unique whiteness and the peculiar 'feel' of crispness; while its combined thinness and transparency are guards against two once very popular modes of forgery: the washing out of the printing by means of turpentine, and erasure with the knife.

The wire-mark, or water-mark, is another precaution against counterfeiting, and is produced in the paper while it is in a state of pulp. In the old manufacture of bank-notes this water-mark was caused by an enormous number of wires (over two thousand) stitched and sewed together; now it is engraved in a steel-faced die, which is afterwards hardened, and is then applied as a punch to stamp the pattern out of plates of sheet-brass. The shading of the letters of this water-mark further increases the difficulty of imitation. The paper is made entirely from new white linen-cuttings—never from anything that has been worn—and the toughness of it may be roughly estimated from the fact that a single bank-note will, when unsized, support a weight of 36 lbs. The paper is produced in pieces large enough for two notes, each of which exactly measures five inches by eight inches, and weighs eighteen grains before it is sized; and so carefully are the notes prepared that even the number of dips into the pulp made by each workman is registered on a dial by machinery.

Few people are aware that a Bank of England note is not of the same thickness all through. In point of fact the paper is thicker in the left-hand corner to enable it to retain a keener impression of the vignette there, and it is also considerably thicker in the dark shadows of the centre letters and beneath the figures at the ends. Counterfeit notes are invariably of one thickness only throughout.

The printing is done from electrotypes—the figure of Britannia being the design of Maclise, the late Royal Academician—after the paper has been first damped with water in the exhausted receiver of an air-pump. Even the printing-ink is of a special make, and is manufactured at the Bank. Comparing a genuine with a spurious note, one observes that the print on the latter is usually tinted with either blue or brown. On the real note it is a very deep shade of velvety black. The ink used in the plate-

printing is made of Frankfort black, which is composed of linseed oil and the charred husks and some other portions of Rhenish grapes. The notes are printed at the rate of 3,000 an hour at a Napier's steam press, and the Bank issue nine million of them a year, representing roughly about 300,000,000% in hard cash. Each note is distinguished from all others by the number and date added to the denomination, and any person possessing this information can ascertain at the Bank to whom the note was issued, when it was issued, when it returned to the Bank, and who presented it. The practice of splitting bank-notes for fraudulent purposes has been prevented by the printed surface being alone made to receive the water-mark. Only the faintest possible trace of it would in fact be retained on the split-off portion. Each note has also thin rough edges, uncut, not to be produced by any mode of cutting paper that is not made expressly for the purpose. In addition to the above precautions, there are secrets connected with the preparation of the pulp from which the paper is made, chemical compounds being introduced at the time of manufacture, while the water-marks are frequently varied, and even the ink has mysterious ingredients introduced into it.

The number of notes coming into the Bank of England every day is about fifty thousand; and three hundred and fifty thousand are destroyed every week, or something like eighteen millions every year. As a matter of fact, the average life of a note of the Bank of England is just under seventy days, and, curious to say, bank-notes are never on any account reissued. The destruction of the documents takes place about once a week, and at 7 P.M., after the notes have been previously cancelled by punching a hole through the amount (in figures) and tearing off the signature of the chief cashier. The notes are burned in a closed furnace, containing merely shavings and bundles of wood. At one time they used to be burnt in a cage, the result of which was that once a week the City was darkened with burnt fragments of Bank of England notes.

In order to facilitate inquiries, and for general purposes of reference, the bank-notes are invariably kept for a period of five years before being burned. The port of Algiers recently witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a steamboat being stoked with bank-notes. No less than forty-five sacks of the seemingly valuable paper were ruthlessly thrust into the furnaces, to the no small tantalising of the stokers. The paper consisted of cancelled notes

of the Bank of Algiers, and the manager stood by throughout the whole operation to see that every note was consumed. But this by the way.

Bank-notes of the value of thousands of pounds are annually lost or destroyed by accident. In the forty years between 1792 and 1832 there were outstanding notes of the Bank of England, presumed to have been either lost or destroyed, amounting to 1,330,000*l.* odd, every shilling of which was clear profit to the Bank. In many instances, however, it is possible to recover the amount of the note from the Bank in full. Notice has to be given to the Bank of the note supposed to have been lost or stolen, together with a small fee and a full narrative as to how the loss occurred. The note is then 'stopped'—that is, if the document should be presented for payment the person 'stopping' the note is informed when and to whom it was paid. If presented (after having been 'stopped') by any suspicious-looking person (and not through a banker), one of the detectives always in attendance at the Bank would be called to question the person as to how and when the note came into his or her possession. It is quite a mistaken idea that 'stopping payment' of a bank-note has the effect supposed by very many people. It simply means that the Bank of England carefully keeps a look-out for the note which has been 'stopped,' and though it cannot refuse to pay such note immediately on its being presented, a notification would at once be made to the person who stopped it, and the Bank would give all the assistance in its power to enable the loser to recover the amount. In the case of a bank-note having been, say, burnt by mistake, if the number is known, and notice sent to the Bank of England, it will pay the amount, after an interval of five years from the date of lodging notice of destruction, should no one have presented the note for payment in the meantime. The Bank in such cases also insists on a guarantee being given by a banker or two householders that it shall be repaid in the event of the document ever turning up and being again tendered for payment. In this connection it is interesting to glance for a moment at a very wholesome rule enforced by Scotch Banks in regard to mutilated and spoilt notes presented for payment. The system adopted in these institutions is a simple one, being merely to pay in proportion to the size of the bank-note; that is to say (unless there is the clearest evidence that the mutilation of the document is purely accidental), if the half of a one-pound note is presented the Bank

only pays ten shillings for it, on the perfectly fair plea that, for all they know to the contrary, the remaining half or third may be presented at a future time by a second person. It is not at all an unusual circumstance for a mutilated note to be presented for payment, burnt perhaps half through, with marks of burning on the fringes. Nor is the damage always accidental. The men who indulge in the luxury of lighting their pipes with a bank-note are not always, as some may think, millionaires or recognised lunatics of society. The spoilt notes are more often than not presented by workmen or labourers, who confess without hesitation that they have intentionally lighted their pipes with them from mere braggadocio.

Very curious occasionally is the fate of bank-notes. They have been found in extraordinary places, have been unlawfully manufactured, have been lost or mislaid under remarkable circumstances, have been destroyed by accident or of set purpose, and have in cases innumerable been the cause of crime, as well as led to the discovery of the criminal.

A few years ago a merchant of Limerick discovered a 'pusher' of counterfeit bank-notes in the following extraordinary manner: A stranger one day visited his shop, and in payment for what he received placed a new Bank of Ireland 'one-pound note' on the counter, and, receiving his change, took his departure. On each Bank of Ireland note is a list of the towns in which it has branches, amongst which is the town of Gorey, in Wexford, and as the merchant was putting the note into his safe this particular town caught his eye, and the idea entered his head that it was misspelt, it being down as 'Gory.' Ordering a clerk to follow his visitor, he took the note to the office of the bank, where, after close scrutiny, it was found to be a clever forgery. The 'pusher' was tracked to a leading hotel, and in a trunk found in his apartments were discovered several thousands of pounds of counterfeit bank-notes.

The recent instance where a bank clerk's bag in a high wind blew open, allowing two thousand pounds in notes to float about upon the breeze, recalls to our mind an occurrence somewhat similar in character, but far more disastrous, that happened in a north country town a little while ago. A farmer, who was completing a purchase of some property at his solicitor's office in Northampton, took five hundred pounds in Bank of England notes from his pocket-book, and placed the documents on a table near

the window. The fire had been smoking, and the window had been thrown open to freshen the room. A sudden gust of wind blew the whole bundle of notes into the fire, and they were all burnt up before anything could be done.

Convenient as the bank-note is, through its capability of being stowed away in a small space, and being of infinitesimal weight, those very qualities sometimes lead to its undergoing experiences of a peculiarly hazardous nature. One of the strangest incidents of this kind occurred a few years ago. Mr. Munro, the sculptor, gave his sister a five-pound note to pay a bill. She put the 'bit of paper' in her pocket, and for a time forgot all about it, even sending her white dress to the laundress without remembering it. When the dress came back from the wash, recollecting the occurrence, and never for a moment expecting to find any trace of the document, she nevertheless looked in the pocket in a hopeless sort of way, and to her surprise and astonishment she found a lump of something hard, which, on being damped and carefully smoothed out, was seen to be the missing note, somewhat diminished in quantity, but none the less valuable for its practical acquaintance with the washing-tub. It was duly cashed at the Bank on it being explained that the note had been washed, boiled, starched, and ironed, which accounted for its dilapidated condition.

Bank-notes have at times played a far more important part in our modern life, and in how many tragic incidents—momentous to more than the mere receiver—have the crisp scraps of paper not figured?

Some sixty odd years ago the cashier of a Liverpool merchant had received in tender for a business payment a Bank of England note, which he held up to the scrutiny of the light so as to make sure of its genuineness. He observed some partially indistinct red marks of words traced out on the front of the note beside the lettering, and on the margin. Curiosity tempted him to try to decipher the words so strangely inscribed. With great difficulty, so faintly written were they, and so much obliterated, the words were found to form the following sentence: 'If this note should fall into the hands of John Dean, of Longhill, near Carlisle, he will learn hereby that his brother is languishing a prisoner in Algiers.' Mr. Dean, on being shown the note, lost no time in asking the Government of the day to make intercession for his brother's freedom. It appeared that for eleven long years the latter had been a slave to the Dey of Algiers, and that his family

and relatives believed him to be dead. With a piece of wood he had traced in his own blood on the bank-note the message which was eventually to secure his release. The Government aided the efforts of his brother to set him free, this being accomplished on payment of a ransom to the Dey. Unfortunately, the captive did not long enjoy his liberty, his bodily sufferings while working as a slave in Algiers having undermined his constitution.

We will conclude our article with an account of a collection which is probably unique in the history of bank-notes. We refer to the museum of a well-known Leeds banker, who possesses an immense number of different bank-notes issued at various times by banks that have come to grievous smash, and which have involved thousands of persons in their ruin. Not alone are bank-notes included in this curious collection of relics of broken banks—which must start a world of painful reflections in a commercial community—but also bonds relating to celebrated undertakings which have proved sources of immense loss to speculators, these including ‘scrip’ of the South Sea Bubble, of many of the schemes of Hudson, the Railway King, and of the Tichborne Bond enterprise. So far as the bank-notes are concerned, it is astonishing to see what a large number of establishments they refer to; and the whole collection represents the names of schemes which have drained the investing public of hundreds of millions sterling. The collector relates that on several occasions visitors who have seen the collection have, on coming to some particular note, burst into tears, for they have been directly connected with the ruin wrought by the crash indicated by that same note.

*MATTHEW AUSTIN.*<sup>1</sup>

BY W. E. NORRIS.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

SIR WILLIAM BAXENDALE.

ONE dry, windy afternoon in spring, Matthew was about to enter the house in Prospect Place which had been occupied by Lady Sara Murray for some months past when the door was opened to give egress to Mrs. Frere, whose carriage was waiting for her.

'So it is all settled, I hear,' said she, 'and the Jeromes are expected back from Italy any day. Lady Sara seems to be in the seventh heaven about it.'

'I didn't know it was settled,' answered Matthew; 'I knew Jerome had been asked to stand.'

'Oh, yes; he is to issue his address as soon as he arrives. Of course one must pray for his success, since he is coming forward in the Conservative interest; still I can't help feeling a little personal bias in favour of Sir William Baxendale, who might just as well have called himself a Liberal Unionist. You haven't met Sir William yet, have you?'

Matthew shook his head. 'I never meet anybody except patients in these days.'

'Oh, I know that,' returned Mrs. Frere, with a laugh; 'I am quite tired of asking you to dine and being told how deeply you regret that you are too busy to make dinner engagements. But I wish you could meet Sir William, because I am sure you would like him, and he is one of our oldest friends. He shut the place up and went away, you know, after poor Lady Baxendale died, two years ago; but he seems to have quite recovered now, and he means to live at home in future, I believe, whether he is returned or not.'

'Well, I am glad you will not lose your friend if the election goes as I hope it will,' remarked Matthew.

Mrs. Frere smiled. 'Oh, I don't think we shall lose him,' she answered. Then she looked as if she had something more to say,

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and finally could not resist saying it. 'Quite between ourselves,' she began—'would you mind walking on a few steps with me? The carriage can follow—*quite* between ourselves, I have certain little hopes of my own. Anne has been a great deal at the Priory lately; she is fond of the two girls, who are growing up now, and she has always been intimate with Emma Baxendale, Sir William's sister, who is keeping house for him provisionally. Of course all this is entirely in the clouds, and I may be altogether mistaken about his wishes; still—it *would* be such a good thing, wouldn't it?'

'Isn't he rather old for her?' Matthew hazarded.

'Only fifty-four, which is really nothing nowadays. Besides, I have felt convinced for a long time past that Anne would end by bestowing herself upon some widower or other. What I was afraid of was that she would select a poverty-stricken widower with an endless family. Now this dear Sir William must have a clear 15,000*l.* a year, George says, and only the two girls, who will be grown-up and married before one knows where one is.'

'I see,' said Matthew absently.

'Why do you look as if you disapproved? Surely you don't think his being a Radical is any objection! A man with his estates can't really be a Radical; it is only a way of talking. And, after all, it would be rather dull if everybody held the same opinions.'

'Sir William Baxendale has my full leave to hold any political opinions that he likes,' answered Matthew, rousing himself from his abstraction and laughing. 'As far as that goes, I dare say I should be a Radical myself, if I were anything. From what you tell me, I should say that the match would be a most suitable one in every way, except as regards disparity of age. And, to be sure, a man of fifty-four is not necessarily an old man.'

Nevertheless, this project did not please him. It kept recurring to his thoughts all through his subsequent talk with Lady Sara, who was in high spirits at the prospect of seeing Lilian again so soon, and who was persuaded that a seat in Parliament would be the very thing to provide her son-in-law with an outlet for superfluous energy. There was no real reason, save the one he had mentioned, for objecting to Anne's marriage with the widowed baronet: assuredly the reason which might once have existed was not even remotely present to his mind. He had seen very little of her during the winter months and had never been

re-admitted to that footing of intimacy which had rendered the early period of their acquaintanceship so pleasant; he liked her and was still a good deal interested in her; but, as he was pretty sure that, for some reason or other, she did not like him, he had not gone out of his way to seek her society. It could not, therefore, make much difference to him whether she married A. or B. or remained a spinster. Upon the whole, he concluded that what had rubbed him the wrong way was Mrs. Frere's genially unromantic treatment of the affair. If one is to have no romance in one's own life, one does like to be refreshed by glimpses of it in the lives of one's friends.

Refreshment of that nature was dealt out to him ungrudgingly a few days later, when Leonard Jerome invaded his solitude at an early hour, with descriptions of life in the glorious south which were almost as regretful as they were enthusiastic.

'I thought I should catch you if I rode over the first thing in the morning,' Leonard said. 'Have you any breakfast to give a hungry man? We're staying at the Grange, you know, and the old man never shows before the middle of the day, so I ventured to absent myself.'

He proclaimed himself supremely happy; he declared that his existence since his marriage had been one continuous dream of bliss; he was evidently under the impression that these tidings would give unqualified satisfaction to the friend who had formerly been his rival. 'I assure you,' said he, 'that when we landed at Dover yesterday in a vile east wind, I had more than half a mind to be off back again by the night boat.'

'And the election?' said Matthew, laughing.

'Oh, well, the election—yes, it wouldn't have done to miss one's chances; though what they are worth I'm sure I don't know. Uncle Richard is full of confidence, and so amiable that I think he must be going to die. He couldn't have welcomed me more affectionately last night if I had been a returned prodigal—which is what he seems to take me for. I trust I sha'n't grieve him by coming in at the bottom of the poll; but, judging by the letters that I have received, Baxendale will take a lot of beating, and there isn't too much time. The whole thing will be a horrid grind, that's certain! Now, let's hear your news. What have you been doing with yourself all this winter?'

'Very much what I did last winter,' answered Matthew, 'and very much what I shall do in all future winters, I suppose. The

daily round, the common task—you would call it a horrid grind, but it seems to satisfy me.'

'It is always satisfactory to do things which one knows that one can do thoroughly well,' Leonard declared generously. 'Lady Sara says you are *the* swell doctor of Wilverton now, and old Jennings will soon have to retire on his ill-gotten gains.'

'Oh, you have seen Lady Sara, then?'

'Yes, she dined with us last night. She had never been inside the house before, and I think the sight of all those expensive pictures and that general magnificence increased her respect for me. It's lucky that Uncle Richard is too obstinate to consult you professionally; otherwise, I know you would make a point of keeping him alive up to the age of ninety. You have such mistaken notions of benevolence!'

Matthew did not smile, finding that these jokes of Leonard's had rather too much flavour of earnestness about them to be funny, and presently the latter resumed:

'Oh, and that reminds me that we came across one undeserving subject of your benevolence in Sicily—Spencer Frere, the son of the old boy at Hayes Park, who won't have anything to do with him because he's so beastly undeserving. I must say he looks the character. When you get an opportunity, just ask Lil how she liked him, and then you'll hear some language! He's grateful to you, though—says you did him a great service once. Does that mean that you were insane enough to back a bill for him?'

Matthew said it did not mean that, but declined to be drawn into further revelations. He asked a few questions, however, about Spencer and his wife, thinking that Anne might perhaps be glad of any information that he could give her respecting her brother.

But indeed Leonard's report was of so discouraging a nature that it seemed scarcely worth imparting to any of Spencer's well-wishers, and Matthew must have had some other motive, conscious or unconscious, for stopping Miss Frere when he met her in the street that same afternoon. She was accompanied by a stout, good-humoured, middle-aged lady whom he at once divined to be Miss Baxendale, and to whom he was presently introduced.

'Emma is canvassing from house to house,' Anne explained; 'I wait outside, because I mustn't countenance Radical misrepresentations.'

'But your sympathies step in with me, my dear; I take care to mention that to electors, who quite understand that you are not to blame for being the daughter of a malignant Tory,' Miss Baxendale remarked, with a loud but not disagreeable laugh.

And as this capable lady had business to transact in the house opposite to which they were standing, Matthew took advantage of being left for a few minutes with her companion to ask, 'Is that so? Are your sympathies with the opposite candidate?'

'I am afraid I have no very strong political sympathies either way,' she answered. 'I am a Tory just as I am a member of the Church of England, and I am quite contented to be both. Only it wasn't I who formed my convictions; they were handed over to me ready-made.'

'Then perhaps it is with Sir William Baxendale, as an individual, that you sympathise?'

'Well, I certainly prefer him, as an individual, to Mr. Jerome. However, as I have no vote, I shall not be tempted to betray my party, so it doesn't matter. I suppose,' added Anne, looking down the street, 'you have not seen the Jeromes since they arrived.'

Matthew replied that he had seen one of them, and then mentioned the circumstance of their having fallen in with Spencer at Palermo. 'I thought you would like to hear that your brother was well and—prosperous,' he said, by way of apology for having detained her.

'What did Mr. Jerome think of them?' inquired Anne quickly. 'Did he say that they were prospering?—that they got on well together?'

'Oh, I believe he only saw them once,' answered Matthew evasively.

'Ah! I understand. I have had very little hope from the first. It is just possible that they may remain friends until he has spent all her money; but after that!——'

'You must not be such a pessimist,' said Matthew. 'For one thing, I don't see why she should allow him to spend all her money, and, for another thing, I have reason to know that your brother is not ungrateful to people who have helped him.'

'He will never be grateful to her, because she is his wife. I dare say you wouldn't feel as I do, but it seems to me that Spencer's marriage is much the worst thing that he has done—the

most degrading, I mean. To marry merely for the sake of comfort or position is unpardonable in a man, I think.'

'But not in a woman?' asked Matthew, eyeing her curiously.

'A woman's case is different; her motives aren't likely to be altogether selfish. Anyhow, she doesn't despise herself for having acted in that way as a man must.'

An imprudent and impolite observation was upon the tip of Matthew's tongue, but was fortunately checked by the advent of a broad-shouldered, thickset gentleman, whose short beard was besprinkled with grey, yet whose comely countenance certainly did not seem to have faced the world for upwards of half a century. Sir William Baxendale was, and is, an extremely popular personage with all classes, being the happy possessor of those three great incentives to popularity, a full purse, an admirable temper, and a pleasant manner. He was not at all unlikely to succeed in any enterprise to which he might turn his attention, and he told Anne cheerfully that, so far as he could see, he was going to win that election.

'I have just met my opponent,' said he. 'A nice young fellow, but scarcely formidable. Grey, of course, was a distinguished man, and constituencies rather like to be represented by distinguished men; still I am by no means sure that even Grey would have come in again upon the present register.'

He knew all about Matthew, with whom he shook hands heartily, remarking that differences of political opinion were, luckily, no bar to private friendship. 'Mr. Frere himself, in whose presence I dare not so much as utter the name of my revered leader, hasn't turned his back upon me yet,' he added, laughing.

Upon the whole, Matthew, as he went his way, could not but acknowledge that the woman who should marry Sir William Baxendale would not have the same reasons for self-contempt as the man who had married Mrs. Johnson. 'I suppose she means to take him,' he reflected. 'Well, it's her affair, and one can't blame her—though I fancied that in matters of that kind she had a rather higher standard than the rest of her sex. But probably the differences between them are only differences of degree.'

The impartiality of Matthew's judgment had, it will be perceived, been slightly disturbed by his personal experiences; and indeed he would have been an amazingly impartial and clear-sighted man if, during the days that followed, he had been able to do justice to Lilian. He saw her frequently both at the

Grange and at her mother's house, but found it quite impossible to be friendly with her. That she should avoid him as much as she could was doubtless natural enough; but he really did not see what he had done to deserve the sarcastic, flippant tone which it pleased her to assume in addressing him, nor did he like her allusions to his friendship for Miss Frere, whose name, it appeared, was already being freely mentioned in conjunction with that of the Radical candidate.

'Had you not better be bestirring yourself?' Lilian asked him, one day. 'This doughty Sir William evidently doesn't let the grass grow under his feet, and if he can't beat Leonard, he may console himself by cutting you out. But perhaps you are too philosophical to mind being cut out.'

It seemed to Matthew that bad taste could hardly go farther than that, and he may be excused for congratulating himself in that he was at least able to endure with philosophy the memory of having been cut out once.

What became increasingly evident to him, as the day fixed for the election drew near, was that Sir William had a very good chance indeed of beating Leonard. Although he took no active part in the proceedings, his daily avocations took him amongst electors of all ranks, and, hearing their opinions, he was able to guess in which direction the current of popular favour was setting. Everybody liked Sir William; not a few shared his views; a somewhat important section of the community appeared to have come to the conclusion that turn-about was fair play. And then the energy and good-humour of the man won him many wavering adherents. Leonard, on the other hand, was not very energetic; he was not very well known; and, although his meetings were respectably attended and his speeches received with applause, it was more than doubtful whether he had caught the ear of those uncertain voters who, by the irony of fate, rule the destinies of this land.

'I'm getting left behind,' Leonard himself told Matthew; 'I can feel it, though I'm assured that we ought to have a clear five hundred majority. But it would be as much as my place was worth to say so at the Grange. Uncle Richard has made up his mind that I am to romp in, and then advance with quick, easy strides to the Treasury bench. He told me in so many words yesterday that I need have no fear of being too poor to keep up a high position. Well, a man can but do his best!'

No man, certainly, can do more; but the unfortunate thing is that not many men who fail are allowed credit for having done as much, and when Sir William Baxendale headed the poll with a majority of over two hundred, Mr. Litton's wrath against his nephew was all the greater because Leonard accepted defeat with becoming equanimity.

'Oh, you need not take so much trouble to show that you don't care,' said he bitterly; 'that has been tolerably obvious all along. An absolute certainty thrown away through sheer laziness and indifference! Well, since you think you were sent into the world for no other purpose than to amuse yourself, all I can say is that I trust you have the means of gratifying your tastes. What do you propose to do now, pray?'

'I have no very definite plan in my mind,' answered Leonard, who knew that it would be useless to protest against the old man's unreasonable anger. 'What would you suggest?'

'Oh, it is not for me to make suggestions; my one experiment in that direction has not had a very encouraging result. I was only wondering whether your next step would be to take a furnished house in London for the season.'

'That is what I should have done if I had had the good luck to be returned, you know,' said Leonard a little apprehensively; for the truth was that he had rather expected his uncle to pay the rent of the house in question.

'And as you have not been returned?'

'I think a month or two of London will be almost necessary; we could hardly begin to vegetate down at Stanwick forthwith.'

'H'm! So your wife and your mother-in-law appear to think. For my own part, if I might venture to offer a suggestion, it would be that you should keep clear of debt and live within your income. Especially as your election expenses are likely to prove rather heavy, I am afraid.'

With this extremely unkind speech, Mr. Litton walked off, leaving Leonard to pull a long face and ask himself whether the old man could really mean to be as bad as his word. It was true that no promise had ever been made as to the defrayal of those election expenses; still there had been a tacit understanding that Leonard should not suffer for having complied with his uncle's wish, and it would be a distinct breach of faith to inflict a heavy fine upon him because the electors had not proved equally accommodating. He confided his misgivings to Matthew, who



subsequently broached the subject to Mr. Litton, with very unsatisfactory results.

'Let him pay,' said the old gentleman shortly; 'he has allowed himself to be beaten, and he must take the consequences of defeat. Perhaps this will teach him that prizes are not to be won by simply standing still and holding out your hand.'

'And suppose he can't pay?' Matthew suggested.

'I imagine that he can raise the required amount and more. If he finds himself pinched, so much the better. I am under no illusion, I assure you; I foresee that the day will come when I shall have to help him out of his difficulties. Only I prefer to wait until he is in a frame of mind to accept conditions as well as cheques. Believe me, my dear Austin, you don't know that fellow yet. It is more to the credit of your heart than of your head that you don't, and it is fortunate for me and for him, and perhaps for you too, that I know you both. Now we will say no more about it, please.'

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### CHAPTER XXX.

#### GIVE AND TAKE.

READY though Leonard was to take his beating, as beatings always ought to be taken, with good humour, he would have been better pleased if his wife had shown some little sign of participating in Mr. Litton's and Lady Sara's mortification. Considering that what had happened to him was really a somewhat serious misfortune, she might, he thought, have remembered that it is a woman's mission to console. Also it might have occurred to her that another branch of woman's mission is to cajole, and that she ought to be bringing feminine arts to bear upon that intractable old uncle of his.

She did neither the one nor the other, because she was not personally disappointed by Leonard's failure and because she particularly disliked old Mr. Litton. She wanted to keep her husband for herself; she had no wish to make a present of him and his time to the nation; while, as for her host, the truth is that he had not been at the pains to show her the slightest civility. If Lilian did not like Mr. Litton, it is certain that Mr. Litton did not like Lilian. He had his own opinion of her; he considered she had jilted an excellent man for a worthless one, he thought

her present demeanour towards Matthew shamelessly callous, and the fashionable jargon which she had picked up in London displeased him. He detested fashionable ladies, detesting them none the less because he only knew them by hearsay, and he suspected that his nephew's wife would end badly. 'No accomplishments, no resources, a pretty face and a husband who will tire of her in a year—it's easy to foretell what that will lead to,' he said to himself.

Consequently, Lilian asked for nothing better than to leave Wilverton Grange. Her own wish was to go straight to Stanwick; but Leonard impatiently scouted such an idea.

'Wait till you have tried the north-east coast in spring!' said he; 'why, the place would be simply uninhabitable at this season of the year! Of course you must go to London and see your friends, like other people. It's a nuisance, because it will cost money and that old bear seems inclined to punish me by starving me out; still there's no help for it that I can see.'

'But I really have no friends whom I care a straw about in London,' Lilian declared. 'Why shouldn't we go to Stanwick and build up big fires? I suppose coal is cheap in that neighbourhood.'

'Oh, nonsense! You wouldn't be able to stand it for a week,' returned Leonard; 'and even if you could, I couldn't. The very thought of such an existence—well, I beg your pardon, Lil,' he broke off, with a laugh, in answer to her reproachful look; 'I didn't mean to be rude. But life in the depths of the country, when there's neither hunting nor shooting nor fishing to be had, is rather slow work for a man, you know.'

After that Lilian held her peace. And indeed Lady Sara quite agreed with her son-in-law that a season, or at least a fragment of a season, in London was indispensable. According to her lights, it was a matter of duty for the bride to be presented on her marriage; she thought, too, that it would be a sad mistake to lose sight of the acquaintances who had proved amiable and hospitable the year before. 'It is so easy to be forgotten,' she remarked, 'and there is really no excuse for your absenting yourselves just now. Later on, of course, excuses are apt to come in the natural order of things, and everybody understands; but for the present you ought to be *en évidence*.'

So, there being no symptom of the excuse alluded to, Lilian was taken by her husband to the flat which still remained upon

his hands, where they made shift to install themselves while looking out for a more commodious dwelling. They could not discover what they wanted within reach, save at an extravagant price, nor could they bring themselves to adopt the alternative of seeking refuge in the far west borders of Kensington; the task of house-hunting, always disheartening, was rendered doubly difficult for them because one of them did not know how much they ought to give, while the other (who declined to say) alternated between parsimony and recklessness. In the end he decided suddenly upon a house in Hans Place which, although of modest dimensions, commanded a sufficiently imposing rent. The house-agent assured him that he was making an uncommonly good bargain, and that it was not everybody who cared to leave such costly china or so much bric-à-brac at the mercy of a tenant.

Lilian could have done with a little less china and bric-à-brac; still the stowing of it away and the re-arranging of the furniture kept her fully occupied for some days and prevented her from feeling too lonely when her husband went out without her. It would have been absurd to expect that he should dance attendance upon her all day long: she acknowledged that, although she felt the change between the present state of things and those halcyon days in southern latitudes. Once, when she asked him where he had been, he answered, with a touch of irritation, 'Oh, I've been at the club, if you want to know, but we mustn't get into the habit of catechising one another, Lil. It's a most reprehensible practice—almost as bad as opening one another's letters.'

He favoured her with several of these half-good-humoured rebukes, some of which she may have deserved. He was, and was likely to remain, an indulgent husband; but he was a husband now, he was no longer an anxious and attentive lover. For the rest, it was not long before Lilian had little leisure time left her in which to lament over the inevitable. After Easter everybody—in her limited sense of that term—came up to London, visitors and engagements grew unmanageably numerous, and the successes of the previous year were more than repeated. If the statements of those who are in a position to speak with authority may be accepted, the social life of a very pretty young married woman who is blessed with friends and relations in high places must be a decidedly exciting and enjoyable one. These ladies, it is said, have a much better time of it than their unmarried sisters, because their situation is a less ambiguous one—although some might

think that their proceedings also were not invariably devoid of ambiguity. Be that as it may, Mrs. Jerome went out a great deal and was immensely admired and did credit to her husband in all respects. It may be assumed that she enjoyed the admiration ; it is certain that she enjoyed the excitement, and that the sensation of being always in a hurry helped her to live only for the moment—which is as pleasant a way of living as another, while youth and health hold out.

That all this gaiety entailed expenditure scarcely needs to be said. The young couple—so Lilian's experienced relatives assured her—were not expected to entertain ; still entertainment is, after all, a relative term, and the little house in Hans Place became the scene of frequent informal dinner-parties. Extravagance, too, is a relative term. What Leonard's annual income might amount to his wife had never been told ; probably he himself could hardly have said—for how is a man to know, in these days, what his rents will bring him in ?—but he took to grumbling at the household expenses, and was so vexed when a curtailment of hospitality was proposed to him that that suggestion was not renewed. Lady Sara, who arrived from Wilverton in due course, and for whom a quiet lodging in the neighbourhood of Sloane Street was secured, advised Lilian not to worry too much about these sordid questions, and above all not to worry her husband.

'There is nothing a man hates so much as being made to economise in trifles,' she said. 'If he calls you a bad manager, you mustn't mind. They all do that when pay-day comes—and then they forget about it unless you insist upon reminding them. Besides, you are sure to be better off before very long. Dr. Jennings told Mrs. Jennings, who told Mrs. Frere, who told me, that poor old Mr. Litton might die any day.'

No doubt this consolatory intelligence enabled Leonard to contemplate with fortitude a financial situation which might otherwise have been somewhat alarming. Moreover, he was careless and optimistic by nature : had he been less so, he would not have taken it for granted that Lilian was as entirely satisfied as he was with their present mode of existence.

There were, as a fact, features in it which did not satisfy her at all. She was no longer an *ingénue*, she had learnt a great deal and was quite aware that the manners of the present day are not unduly strait-laced ; still she could not and did not like Leonard's flirtations. It was true that these were as often as not carried on

under her very nose; it was probable that he meant nothing at all by them; and yet they exasperated her. Very likely they would not have done so if the ladies to whom he was pleased to devote himself could have denied themselves the satisfaction of an occasional triumphant glance in her direction. But they never do deny themselves that satisfaction: who knows what troubles and scandals might not be averted if they did?

Now, there was a certain Mrs. Papillon, a tall woman with sleepy dark-blue eyes and a finely developed figure, whose privilege it was to be at this time the subject of Lilian's especial animosity. As she was no longer quite in her first youth, had never been precisely beautiful, and was intensely stupid, she might very well have been despised; but Leonard, who laughed at her behind her back, had a way of gazing sentimentally into those violet eyes which was provoking to witness. He pretended to find her amusing and was fond, when he had a disengaged evening, of arranging combined visits to the theatre with her and her quiet little sandy-haired husband. It was after one of these joint expeditions (which always terminated with supper in Hans Place) that Lilian made a disagreeable discovery. The Papillons had wished her Good night and had left her free to indulge in the yawns which she had been politely devouring for several hours past, when she recollected that she had left some unopened letters in the morning-room. Going downstairs to fetch them, and passing the little sandy-haired man, who was seated in the hall, staring patiently at his shoes, she arrived just in time to overhear a few words, murmured by Mrs. Papillon, while Leonard tenderly enveloped her in her opera-cloak. The words, to tell the truth, were silly rather than compromising, and Leonard did not look at all abashed by his wife's sudden appearance; but Mrs. Papillon's hastily suppressed giggle made Lilian's blood boil. She maintained a show of composure until she was alone with her husband, and then said, in a voice which trembled slightly:

'Leonard, I will not have that woman in the house again. If you want to see her, you must contrive meetings with her somewhere else.'

'My dear girl,' he remonstrated, 'don't be so ridiculous! I am sorry you heard what she said; but really, you know——'

'Really what?' asked Lilian, speaking in a tone which he had not heard from her since their marriage and which reminded him unpleasantly of half-forgotten days gone by.

'I did think you had too much good sense to be jealous!' he exclaimed plaintively. 'I suppose I ought to take it as a compliment; but—won't it become a little inconvenient if I am never allowed to speak to any woman who isn't either old or hideous?'

'I don't wish to put you to inconvenience,' answered Lilian coldly; 'you are perfectly free to amuse yourself in your own way, so long as you do not insult me publicly. But I will not receive Mrs. Papillon again, and you can tell her so, if you like. I doubt whether she will be surprised.'

'It is so likely that I shall tell her such a thing as that!' returned Leonard, half laughing, half vexed. 'Come, Lil! you don't really imagine that I have been making love to Mrs. Papillon, do you?'

'Yes; since you ask me, that is just what I do imagine; she certainly wouldn't have spoken as she did without a good deal of encouragement. You can go on making love to her, if you choose; only it must not be in your own house any more.'

Leonard might easily have made his peace with his wife there and then, and at the bottom of his heart he knew that he might; but he was annoyed with her for making a scene upon what he considered such very insufficient grounds, and he thought that to profess contrition and promise amendment would be a rather weak proceeding. So, with an eye to future comfort, he said:

'All this is the most dreadful nonsense! If you insist upon it, we can drop the Papillons, though I am not going to make you a general laughing-stock by announcing that you are jealous of the woman. But I must say that I don't see how we are to go on seeing our friends at all, unless you are prepared to—how shall I put it?—to give and take a little.'

'Are *you* prepared to give and take?' asked Lilian, with an ominous tremor in her voice.

'Certainly I am—within the usual recognised limits. I have complete confidence in you, and I think you might have rather more in me,' answered Leonard virtuously. He added, after a pause: 'London isn't Arcadia, and life can't be one long honeymoon, you know, Lil.'

'Very well,' she returned, gathering up her long skirt and moving towards the door; 'I will endeavour not to shock you by behaving like a mere *bourgeoise* again. I think we clearly understand one another now—which, after all, is the main thing. As for Mrs. Papillon, upon second thoughts, I won't

shut the door against her; it would be scarcely worth while, would it?’

Leonard was not quite sure, that night, whether he had gained a victory or not; but on the following day he felt no more doubt about the matter, for Lilian was in good spirits and appeared to have entirely got the better of her unexpected fit of jealousy. It was true that she held him at a certain distance and that some endearing epithets to which he had become accustomed had dropped out of her vocabulary; but that was not unnatural. He could understand her having felt hurt—possibly even outraged—by an episode which was really without significance, and he would have offered her a frank apology, had he not been persuaded that it would be bad policy to do so. Meanwhile, he nobly resolved that he would make the silent concession of avoiding Mrs. Papillon (who happened to bore him) from that day forth.

London, as Leonard had truly remarked, is not Arcadia, nor have two young married people who frequent the liveliest circles of its society much leisure left to them for billing and cooing. The Jeromes got on together wonderfully well for some little time, because during that time they were only nominally together, and one of them congratulated himself upon his wisdom in having made a stand against excessive prudery at the outset. He was not weary of his wife, he looked forward to a renewal of their former relations at some happy future date; but for the moment he judged it expedient that she should learn to do as others did and assimilate the tone of that section of the community which it was her manifest destiny to adorn. He did not see, or perhaps did not choose to see, that she was taking him somewhat too literally at his word. With her face, she had not far to seek for admirers, nor did she repel the advances which were speedily made to her from various quarters. She began to be talked about; the watchful and friendly dowagers who had been instrumental in launching her upon her career the year before warned her that it wouldn't do, and were politely snubbed for their pains. Then one of them deemed it as well to breathe a hint to Leonard, who kept his eyes open and saw sundry incidents which seemed to call for intervention on his part. Driving home with his wife late one evening, he took occasion to say, in a tone of kindly reproof:

‘I don't want to make any complaint, Lil, but of course you can't know as much as I do about all the men whom you meet,



and there are one or two fellows whom I would rather that you were not quite so familiar with.'

'Are there?' she returned, with a yawn. 'If you will tell me who they are, I won't be quite so familiar with them, then.'

He mentioned a few names and gave a few reasons for mentioning them; to which she replied indifferently:

'All right; they shall be placed upon my black list.'

This ready acquiescence did not altogether please Leonard, who had anticipated something different. He meditated uneasily for a few minutes and then abruptly burst out: 'I say, Lil, hasn't this gone on long enough? Can't we—well, kiss and be friends?'

'Aren't we friends?' she asked, in a tone of sleepy surprise.

'You know we are not! I'm sorry I put your back up about Mrs. Papillon, and you may have noticed that I scarcely ever speak to her now.'

'Don't you? I haven't noticed.'

'Well, so it is, anyhow, and of course I understand that you have been going on as you have done lately to punish me. I don't grumble; it was a fair retort enough—although it stands to reason that a man may do lots of things which a woman can't safely do—but I think we might cry quits now.'

He took her hand, which she did not withdraw; but he hardly knew what to make of her rejoinder.

'There is no need for this touching reconciliation,' she said, laughing; 'we haven't quarrelled, and really, if you will believe me—but I suppose you won't—I had no intention of punishing you. Oh, here we are at home, thank goodness! I am too tired to talk any more now, but if you will remind me to-morrow about those men whom you don't wish me to cultivate, I will make a point of neglecting them.'

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### IN SEARCH OF A FRIEND.

To men of Leonard Jerome's cheery, eupeptic temperament reflection, analysis, and the weighing of one consideration against another are a weariness of the flesh. They have fits of deep dejection and resentment against Fate when things go askew with them; but these seldom last long, and beneath their despondency

lurks always a happy conviction that somehow or other it will be all right in the end. Leonard, therefore, soon shook off the sensation of uneasy bewilderment which fell upon him after that brief colloquy with his wife. He did not understand what she would be at, he dimly perceived that she was not exactly the woman he had taken her for; but to try and arrive at a comprehension of her standpoint by recollecting what her education and early surroundings had been, and by making due allowance for the principle of heredity (a method which he would certainly have adopted, had she been a horse or a dog), would have been altogether foreign to his nature. It was much simpler to conclude that, despite her assurance to the contrary, she had meant to pay him out for his venial offence, and it was likewise for the comfort of a man who hated scenes to assume that the best plan was to say no more about it. She would 'come round' if she was left alone, he thought—and he proceeded, with a light heart, to leave her alone accordingly.

Nevertheless, Lilian had spoken truly. She did not wish to punish her husband, nor did she believe that it was in her power to punish him by exciting his jealousy. All she wished was to forget, if possible, her own unhappiness, which was very great, and she took the means which came readiest to her hand. She was conscious of having sacrificed much—her self-respect amongst other things—for Leonard's sake, and she now saw that he had not been worthy of the sacrifice. She had, of course, been a little jealous of Mrs. Papillon, and her husband's manner with other women had displeased her; but these were trifles: the real calamity was that Leonard no longer loved her—perhaps never had loved her nor experienced any sentiment with regard to her beyond admiration for her beauty and a desire to secure what had seemed to be denied to him. When to this it is added that she was young, that she had an intense natural craving for happiness, and that her standard of rectitude was not a particularly exalted one, it will be perceived that Mrs. Jerome was in a somewhat perilous condition of mind.

Fortunately for her, peril did not chance to present itself at that time in a concrete form. The men whom she had allowed to whisper impertinences in her ear, and to whom, in compliance with Leonard's request, she now turned a cold shoulder, had neither interested nor amused her. They had kept her brain and her tongue occupied; but there were plenty of others equally

available for that purpose. It cannot be said that she was discreet in her conduct; yet, on the other hand, nothing definite could be alleged against her: the only remark that could be made—and it was made with some frequency—was that she was beginning to emancipate herself rather early in the day.

Madame d'Aultran, who came up to claim acquaintance at the French Embassy one evening, was full of arch allusions to the above effect and professed an extreme curiosity to hear what had become of 'that poor doctor—the most eccentric type that I have met with yet in your island of eccentricities. He was actually at your wedding, was he not?—and in a most conspicuous capacity. Now, that could not have happened anywhere in the world but in England!'

'Mr. Austin is a great friend of my husband's,' said Lilian.

'And a little bit of yours, it must be avowed. And now he has retired to his province, eh? But perhaps he will emerge again when friendship calls—friendship for your husband, *bien entendu*. You allow him his fair share of liberty, *par parenthèse*, that husband of yours.'

Lilian had become callous to thrusts which would once have roused her ire. 'It is the custom to do so, is it not?' she returned carelessly. 'I have always understood that you favoured that system.'

'Oh, I!' cried Madame d'Aultran, with a shrieking laugh and an upward jerk of her bare shoulders—'I am not an Englishwoman, and I did not make a love-match. My husband does as he pleases and lets me do as I please. To be sure, you enjoy the same privilege, they say. It is all very interesting and a little comic. One thinks one has witnessed the whole drama; but not at all! We have only reached the second act, and I am quite impatient for the *dénouement* and the reappearance of the faithful doctor. What puzzles me is the exact part he can be made to play; for, after all, he is an Englishman, and he seemed to me to be very practical, as well as very moral.'

Lilian did not take the trouble to reply; but in this time of her distress her thoughts often turned to the true friend whom she had injured and whom she had afterwards intentionally insulted. She knew now that her girlish affection for him had not been love; she knew also that she had cured him of his fancy. She did not regret having alienated him—it had been necessary to do that—but she sometimes longed for the sympathy and

counsel which he might have given her. Neither the one nor the other could be expected from her mother, and it was the result of circumstances that she had not a single friend in the whole world. Thus she stood, facing the whole world and its temptations, a solitary, smiling figure, much envied by the majority of those who beheld her and with no other equipment against danger than a certain defiant, intermittent pride.

Leonard thought he was in great luck when he and his wife were invited to spend the Ascot week with Lilian's well-to-do cousins, who had taken a house at Sunninghill for that meeting. That they should forego Ascot altogether had not presented itself to him as a possible form of economy, although he had the best reasons for wishing to economise, and he had, as he said, contemplated 'pigging it by rail.' Now, however, the thought of being able to do things comfortably put him in such good humour that he could not find it in his heart to be ungenerous, and he told Lilian to order herself some new frocks forthwith. She obeyed without hesitation and without gratitude, being well aware that he liked her to be handsomely dressed and having a suspicion that he even felt something of the complacency of ownership in watching the attentions of which she was the object.

If he did, he had his reward; for no one was more universally admired on the first day of the meeting than the beautiful Mrs. Jerome, nor were there many ladies present who received such trustworthy information from competent authorities as to the probable results of the racing. She had a few bets—not that she cared much either for sport or for gambling, but that it seemed a pity to disappoint those who had shown themselves so eager to oblige her—and she won her money. Leonard also, following her lead, speculated successfully; so it was in a mood of radiant good-will towards all mankind that he conducted her to the paddock, late in the afternoon, to inspect the horses.

On their way thither they were overtaken by two gentlemen who wore the long, unbuttoned frock-coats and carried over their arms the crook-handled umbrellas of the period. One man in his London clothes looks so like another that they did not at first recognise the urbane individual who took off his hat and said, with cheerful familiarity, 'Here we are again!' But Lilian's chin was raised and her eyelids dropped before he had time to state who he was, while Leonard, with a sudden vision of a dimly lighted sitting-room in Palermo and an irate lady who declared that nothing on

earth would induce her to speak to a certain person again, responded somewhat less cordially than was his wont: 'Oh, yes, Mr. Frere, of course! I beg your pardon; I didn't know you were in England.'

'Home on leave of absence,' answered Spencer tranquilly; 'Arabella prefers to remain abroad for the present. We were sorry you had to bolt off from Sicily in such a hurry. You came back to fight the Wilverton election, didn't you?'

'And to lose it,' said Leonard.

'Well, it wasn't much of a loss, I should think. How any man can want to be in the House of Commons is a mystery to me—hard work, no pay, and precious little sport, by all accounts. However, I believe, there are a good many men in the House who don't want to be there, eh, Vawdrey? Let me introduce my friend Captain Vawdrey—or perhaps I ought to say Mr. Vawdrey, now that he has chucked the service.'

Spencer's friend, who had been gazing at Mrs. Jerome in undisguised and open-mouthed admiration, accompanied his bow with an ingenuous blush. He was evidently a gentleman, and, with his fresh complexion, his slight fair moustache, and his slim figure, might have passed very well for a subaltern in the Guards. He was, however, some years older than he looked, and was now, as Lilian presently ascertained from him, a full-blown M.P. She walked on towards the paddock with him, being determined to hold no parley with the offensive Spencer, who was apparently not to be shaken off, and she found him, notwithstanding a little preliminary shyness, very chatty, unaffected, and communicative.

'Legislation isn't much in my line,' he told her, 'but I was obliged to go in for it when my poor old governor died, last winter, and when I succeeded to the property. My mother wished it, and as he had held the seat for I don't know how many years they let me in without a contest. It's a funny thing that such a number of square pegs get shoved into round holes; isn't it? Lots of fellows would give their ears to be eldest sons, whereas I should have been as happy as possible with a pretty good allowance and my commission.'

'You were in the Army, then?' asked Lilian.

'Yes, in the 22nd Lancers. That's how I came to be acquainted with poor Frere.'

'Oh, he was a brother-officer of yours, was he?' said Lilian.

She could not help adding, 'I should never have supposed so; he doesn't *look* like it.'

'How do you mean? He wasn't an officer, of course; he enlisted. But I believe he would have got his commission after a bit, if it hadn't been for an unfortunate row which spoilt his chance. His people have treated him awfully badly, you know.'

'I don't know much about it; but I understood that he had treated them rather badly,' Lilian said.

'Oh, well, I dare say he kicked over the traces in his youth; but it was hardish lines to cut him off with a shilling for that. He has had crushing luck, poor chap! That Mrs. Johnson, who married him, is—well, she ain't a very nice sort of woman, you know, and as far as I can make out they have had a split already. What is going to become of him I'm sure I don't know. I'm afraid you don't much like Frere, Mrs. Jerome,' he added, with a deprecating side-glance at his neighbour.

'I'm afraid I don't,' answered Lilian, laughing, 'and I doubt very much whether you would either, if you were not too good-natured to dislike anybody.'

She had taken a fancy to this boyish representative of his fellow-countrymen, who diffused an atmosphere of simplicity and kindness around him, and she thought it only right to warn him in a motherly way that friends of the type of Mr. Spencer Frere are apt to prove expensive companions to young men of fortune. But Mr. Vawdrey would not allow her to finish her sentence.

'Oh, I assure you I'm not such a fool as I look,' he interrupted eagerly; 'I know well enough that a rich man has got to harden his heart, and I've had one or two rather sickening experiences already. But you're mistaken about Frere; he doesn't belong to the parasite class. Of course I can understand what you object to; he has a nasty, swaggering sort of manner, and I wish he hadn't. Only I think some allowance ought to be made for a fellow who, after all, is a gentleman by birth and who is always being treated as if he were a cad. I mean, if I were in his place I dare say I should be just as much inclined to snap my fingers in people's faces as he is.'

'Well, you know Mr. Frere better than I do,' said Lilian; 'perhaps you are right and I am wrong. Anyhow, we won't quarrel over it.'

They did not quarrel at all; on the contrary, they became remarkably good friends and exchanged many impressions while

Leonard and Spencer were watching the saddling of the favourite for the next race. Vawdrey, it appeared, occupied with some friends a small house close to that in which Lilian was staying; he enjoyed the privilege of a slight acquaintanceship with her cousins, and he asked her diffidently whether she thought they would mind his looking in after the races on the morrow. 'It isn't so much that I care about seeing them; but I should like to meet *you* again, Mrs. Jeromè, if you would let me,' he explained, with delightful candour.

'And I should like very much to meet you again,' Lilian returned; 'only I hope you won't think it necessary to bring Mr. Frere with you.'

'Oh, he is going back to town to-night,' the young man answered; 'I met him on the course an hour or two ago and gave him some lunch, that was all. I wish I could give him something more substantial than lunch, for I'm afraid he is hard put to it for a job, poor beggar! Perhaps I may be able to lend him a hand later on, though; we shall see.'

One of the many gentlemen who delighted to honour Mrs. Jerome with their attentions coming up at this moment, Mr. Vawdrey fell back, and she saw no more of him; but she ascertained in the course of the evening that he had recently come into a fine property in Lincolnshire, that he was both liked and esteemed by all who knew him, and that he was considered to be one of the most eligible young bachelors of the year. Leonard also spoke of him in appreciative terms, mentioning that he had asked him to call in Hans Place. Lilian was glad to hear that; for her new acquaintance (whom she inwardly described as 'a nice, healthy-minded boy') had refreshed her with his simple talk, and if she wanted a friend, she wanted still more somebody who could take her out of herself for half an hour at a time.

However, she did not come across him on the race-course the next day—which, unfortunately, proved a disastrous one for her husband. Leonard had never been much of a betting man; but just now he was sadly in need of ready money, and, having won a little on the opening events of the meeting, he was tempted to follow his luck. The consequence was that he incurred somewhat heavy losses, and drove away from the scene of his discomfiture silent and gloomy. It was a pity that he found some disagreeable letters awaiting his perusal on his return, and it was an even greater pity that Lilian, seeing him moodily smoking a cigarette in



the garden, with his hands behind his back, should have selected that opportunity of joining him and carelessly handing him over a sheaf of bills which the post had brought her. He snatched them roughly out of her hand, glanced over them, and gave utterance to an exclamation of disgust which, to tell the truth, was both profane and unrefined.

'Well, now look here, Lil,' said he, 'we really must come to some understanding about this sort of thing. I'm not a millionaire, and if such bills as these are to be handed over to me for payment, I shall precious soon be a bankrupt. Anything more preposterous than your dressmaker's charges I never heard of in my life!'

'I thought you wished me to employ a good dressmaker,' she answered coldly. 'Of course, when one does that, one has to pay for it; but I would very much rather that you made me a fixed allowance. Then I could undertake to keep within it.'

He had not yet made this customary arrangement, partly because he did not know what sum in respect of pin-money would be considered reasonable by a woman who went so much into society as Lilian did, and partly because he was growing more and more averse to the payment of ready money at stated intervals; but he felt that she was putting him in the wrong, and was therefore the more provoked with her.

'I don't remember your ever having asked me to give you a fixed allowance,' he said; 'probably it wouldn't have made much difference if I had. I am sure I have told you often enough what I think ought to be ample for household expenses, but the bills generally come to nearly double that amount.'

'I dare say I am a bad manager,' answered Lilian. 'All I can say is that, if I knew how much I had to dress upon, I could dress accordingly. The best manager in the world couldn't promise that the weekly bills should be kept down to a certain amount without knowing how many people were to be asked to dinner in the course of the week.'

Leonard sighed impatiently. 'Where there's a will there's a way,' he remarked. 'It's easy enough to accuse me of stinginess; but really I don't think I ought to be expected to be my own housekeeper.'

The outrageous injustice of this speech was too much for Lilian's temper. 'You put words into my mouth which I have never used or thought of using!' she exclaimed. 'Do you want

to pick a quarrel with me? If so, you might surely hit upon some more plausible means of doing it.'

'No doubt I might,' answered Leonard bitterly; 'but, as it happens, I don't want to quarrel; I prefer a quiet life. I only wish you to understand, once for all, that I can't afford to spend what you ask me to spend on your dress.'

Lilian had an angry, but entirely justifiable retort on the tip of her tongue. Before she could utter it, however, a deferential cough behind her caused her to turn her head, and thus she found herself face to face with Mr. Vawdrey, whose approaching footsteps across the lawn had been unheard either by her or by her husband. That the young man had been an unintentional eavesdropper was made only too evident by his concerned countenance. He stood, with his hat in his hand, looking so distressed and so foolish that Lilian could not help laughing, while Leonard said:

'Oh, how are you? Very good of you to look us up. I'm afraid I must leave Mrs. Jerome to entertain you, because I have some letters to write before the post goes, but I dare say you'll be coming into the house presently.'

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### AN INTERRUPTION.

LILIAN continued to laugh after Leonard had so unceremoniously turned his back on their visitor. 'You see what lies before you,' she remarked. 'I suppose married people always squabble, and I suppose that in nine cases out of ten it is the same subject that starts the squabbles.'

'Oh, I'm not going to marry for a long time, if I can help it,' was Mr. Vawdrey's prompt reply. 'I'd very much rather not—though my mother and the girls seem to be determined that I shall.'

'Ah, then you won't be able to help it. But never mind; it doesn't follow that you will have my husband's bad luck.'

'I only wish there were the faintest hope of my ever having his extraordinary good luck!' the young man declared with fervour.

'Thank you; but I don't see how you can tell whether his

luck is good or bad. At any rate, you know from what you overheard just now that he finds a wife an expensive luxury.'

'I'm awfully sorry that I stole upon you like that,' Mr. Vawdrey answered penitently; 'I'm always doing these stupid, clumsy things. As for what I overheard, all I can say is——'

'No, don't!' interrupted Lilian, holding up her hand to check him. 'I know exactly what you were going to say, and I assure you it would give me no sort of satisfaction to be told that I was in the right by a person who couldn't possibly judge. As a matter of fact, there isn't much excuse for me, because I was not at all well off before my marriage, and I ought to know how to economise. All husbands are cross when they are asked to pay their wives' bills; you will be just the same.'

'I don't think I shall,' he returned quietly; and Lilian quite understood what he meant. Remonstrances might, in the opinion of this unprejudiced gentleman, be permissible, but not such a tone as Leonard had seen fit to adopt. 'However, I'm not married yet!' he added, setting his teeth in a resolute fashion which caused her laughter to break out afresh.

In truth she found it very necessary to laugh, being a good deal more inclined to do the contrary. Hers was not a nature to pardon injustice readily, nor could she regard her husband's language as being what in reality it was, a mere petulant outbreak, provoked rather than originated by her so-called extravagance. She thought just what she had said, that he wanted to pick a quarrel with her, and she was certain that if anything of his former love for her had remained he could not have spoken as he had done. For the moment, therefore, she was chiefly anxious to escape from the memory of these miserable dissensions, and as she strolled over the smooth sward with her companion, she contrived in some measure to accomplish that object.

For Vawdrey was really a delightful companion—would have been delightful under any circumstances, and was especially so just now, when she thirsted for the society of some fellow-creature whose views of life were less stereotyped than those of the class into which she had been thrown against her will. He did not care about fashionable folks, he told her; he had a modest craving for adventure, and would have liked to be sent on active service to India or Africa. But since that could not be, and since the House of Commons claimed him for its own, all he could hope for was an occasional sporting trip to distant lands during the winter.

'Not that I shall be allowed to absent myself for long at a time,' he added ruefully; 'there's the property to be looked after, you see, and one's insatiable constituents to be addressed. My mother says I must stick to my duties, whether I like them or not—which is right enough, I suppose. I wonder what you would think of my mother. Most people call her rather alarming, but she's the kindest-hearted woman that ever breathed really. My sisters are countrified sort of girls; but then I like that sort best, don't you?'

'Do I look as if I liked that sort best?' asked Lilian, smiling.

'No, I'm not sure that you do exactly; but it's easy to see that you don't like artificial things or people. I think one can generally tell whether one will get on with a person or not, and I knew before I had been talking to you five minutes yesterday that we should be friends—that is, if you would let me.'

Lilian was not at all disposed to refuse this frankly proffered friendship. There was just enough of admiration in the young fellow's eyes to be flattering, without being in the least disquieting, and it was a rest and relief to talk to a man whose aims were honest and honourable. In return for his confidences, she told him a good deal more about her life, past and present, than she was in the habit of mentioning to her usual associates, and she could see that he divined and sympathised with much that she did not mention. By the time that some of the other people who were staying in the house had sauntered out and joined them it had been agreed that Mr. Vawdrey should find his way to Hans Place as soon as might be. Meanwhile he promised that he would look out for her on the course the next day.

He kept his promise; but it was in vain that he searched high and low for the lady by whom he had been so greatly fascinated, and who at the moment when the Ascot Cup was being won and lost was far away from him both in body and mind. A blow which may fall at any time is as startling when it does fall as though it had never been anticipated, and the telegram which summoned Lilian to her mother's death-bed stunned and dazed her, obliterating the memory of all recent incidents. Leonard did not accompany her to London. He had offered to do so, and had said everything that was kind and sympathetic; but, either because he wished to keep his wife's spirits up or because he did not wish to lose a day's racing, or possibly from a combination of both motives, he had declared his conviction that this would prove

to be a false alarm. So she had begged him to remain where he was and had set off by herself, with the unconvincing speeches whereby he had attempted to reassure her still ringing in her ears.

'Her ladyship is sinking fast,' Lady Sara's maid had telegraphed; but this, as Leonard pointed out, had been said more than once before, and servants always make the worst of things. Lilian tried to hope during the journey, which she accomplished in an agony of impatience, owing to the many delays occasioned by the crowded state of the line; but she felt sure that the end had come at last and that she would never vex the most indulgent of mothers by her waywardness again. Her mother had not always understood her, and of late there had been something of an unacknowledged estrangement between them; but who had been to blame for these things? Lilian, in her sorrow and remorse, took the entire blame upon herself: it may be that the larger share of it did in truth belong to her.

When at length she reached the small and somewhat airless lodging which had been taken for Lady Sara, her worst fears received instant confirmation. The doctor who had been called in was leaving the house as she drew up, and he turned back to tell Mrs. Jerome that there was absolutely nothing more to be done. He mentioned the nature of the attack, adding that it might have been, and he believed had been, surmounted, but that the patient had not strength enough left to rally.

'We must be thankful that there is little or no pain and that the end, which cannot be many hours distant, will be a peaceful one,' he said, with a furtive glance at his watch.

'Oh, I have no doubt you have done all in your power,' answered Lilian hurriedly, 'but she has been as bad—quite as bad as this before—once at Wilverton, and there was a doctor there, Mr. Austin, who saved her. May I not telegraph for Mr. Austin?'

'My dear lady,' replied the physician in charge of the case, 'if it will give you the slightest comfort to telegraph for anyone, by all means do so; only it is my duty to tell you that Mr. Austin will be brought to London upon a fruitless errand. Pray, act as you please in the matter, however. I myself am obliged to leave you now; but I will return in the course of an hour or two.'

Lilian despatched her telegram: it was a forlorn hope, but she could not bring herself to resign it. Then she went into the sick-room, and then she knew for certain that she was in the presence of approaching death.

Lady Sara was still alive, and she recognised Lilian with the faintest of faint smiles; but all power of speech seemed to have left her, and her breath was drawn in long, irregular gasps. She had been like that since early morning, the nurse said, adding aloud, with the unconscious callousness which those to whom death scenes are familiar often display, 'The wonder is that she has lasted so long.'

Lilian, after begging the attendants to leave her, knelt down by the bedside and took her mother's cold hand in both her own. There were many things which she wished to say, and she tried to say them; but it was difficult to tell how much or how little the dying woman understood of those self-accusations and entreaties for forgiveness. She was, at any rate, unable to respond, save by an occasional feeble pressure of the fingers. Twice she struggled to speak; but the result was only a hoarse, unintelligible whisper, and after a time Lilian, fearing to distress her, fell back into silence.

Thus hour after hour passed slowly away. The incessant roar of the traffic outside, the hot, vitiated air which rose in puffs through the open window, blowing the blind inwards, the drone of an Italian organ round the corner, and, as the afternoon wore on, the shrill cries of the newspaper-boys, announcing the latest telegrams with the list of winners—all these things served as a continuous, relentless background for Lilian's miserable musings. To the world at large, it is absolutely of no consequence whatever whether we are well or ill, living or dead. No reflection can be more trite; yet there are few which, at certain times, strike us as more sad or more strange. Do what we will, we cannot realise our own insignificance until it is brought home to us in some commonplace, convincing fashion, and somehow or other it hurt Lilian more to hear two butcher boys exchanging jocular repartees on the doorstep than to remember, as she did every now and then, that Leonard was amusing himself on Ascot Heath.

It was not much or often that she thought of Leonard: what was vividly present to her mind was an epitome—so far as she was able to form one—of the life which was now drawing to its close. Constant physical suffering, struggles to keep up a decent appearance upon insufficient means, secret anxieties which had been hinted at every now and then—there seemed to have been very little else in poor Lady Sara's existence, as her daughter had known it. But there had been no grumbling or repining, no selfishness, no lack

of such sympathy as she had had it in her power to give. Doubtless there are not a few highly venerated personages whose record is less creditable and whose reward has been more apparent. Lady Sara Murray had been what is called worldly, circumstances having rendered her so, just as circumstances have rendered certain other people what is called religious. She had, however, tried to do her duty, according to her conception of it, and it may be hoped that certain other people can say as much for themselves. Lilian, for one, did not feel entitled to make any such boast. She had indeed loved her mother; but she had not been guided by her; she had always taken her own way, and of late—so it seemed to her—she had viewed with cold indifference the loneliness to which that uncomplaining mother had been condemned.

From time to time the nurse looked in and, after a quick, professional glance, retired; between five and six o'clock the doctor reappeared, said a few words, suggested to Mrs. Jerome that she should take a little refreshment, and then went away, promising to call again later.

'There is scarcely any pulse,' the nurse remarked, after his departure; 'I don't think it can be long now. But really you had better let me bring you a cup of tea, ma'am.'

Lilian shook her head. 'I don't want anything, thank you,' she answered. 'I will call you when—when you are needed.'

It was about an hour after this that Lady Sara stirred uneasily. She seemed to be trying to raise her head, her eyes were opened wide, there was an eager, appealing look upon her pinched features, and Lilian, gathering that she wished to say something, stooped over her. In long gasps, with a break between each, the words came—'Very good to me—kiss me, dear—God bless you.' Then there was something incoherent about 'temptation,' and then, with a supreme effort and in clearer accents, 'But never leave him, dear—never leave your husband, whatever happens! Promise!'

The promise was given, and the anxious mother's eyes closed for the last time upon a world in which she had not played a prominent part and from which she would be missed for a while by one human being only. Perhaps she had seen and known more than she had cared to talk about; perhaps her old dread of the family tendencies had never been quite allayed: in either case, she had up to the last done what in her lay to preserve her daughter from misfortune.

When Matthew Austin arrived, late that night, he was received



by Leonard, who had come up from Ascot and who seemed surprised to see him.

'Unfortunately, I was not at home when Mrs. Jerome's telegram came,' Matthew explained, 'but I started as soon as I could. Am I in time to be of any use?'

Leonard shook his head. 'Oh, it's all over,' he answered; 'the whole thing has been very sudden, and I suppose Lil must have forgotten that she had telegraphed for you, for she said nothing to me about it. I'm very glad you have come, though. Perhaps you may be able to do something with her—I can't. She won't leave her mother's room and she'll hardly answer when she is spoken to. Of course it's awfully sad, and I'm very sorry for her and all that; still she ought to go home and get a little rest now, don't you think so?'

Leonard was evidently smarting under a sense of ill-usage; and indeed he had lost more money that day, so that he was hardly in a fit frame of mind to cope with feminine unreasonableness. He added, with a self-pitying sigh, 'I've had no dinner yet,' and he was quite willing to commit the management of a delicate task to his more experienced friend, who said:

'Go away and get your dinner, then; I'll look after Mrs. Jerome. I think you will have to let her stay here to-night, if she wants to do so, but we will get her home in the morning. I will give her a sleeping draught, if necessary.'

'Has he gone?' was the first question that Lilian put to Matthew, whom she did not recognise until she had stared frowningly at him for a minute; and on receiving an affirmative reply, she drew a long breath of relief. 'He has been saying such horrible things to me!' she murmured. And then, after passing her hand across her forehead, 'He means to be kind, but he doesn't seem to understand that I *can't* leave her!—*you* understand.'

Matthew understood well enough; but it was only by the exercise of a good deal of patience and finally by the assertion of medical authority that he could induce her to quit the room where her mother's body lay. Then she had to be forced to eat and drink, which was no easy matter, nor was it until he had spoken so sharply to her as to bring the tears into her eyes that she would obey the orders which he felt constrained to give. Having once yielded, however, she became suddenly and pathetically docile, and from that moment he had no further trouble with her.

He was obliged to go back to Wilverton the next morning;

but he contrived to return before nightfall, and he stayed with the Jeromes until after the funeral, looking after all details for them and making himself useful in such a quiet, matter-of-course way that it seemed scarcely necessary to thank him.

'No wonder they call you the medicine-man!' Leonard said, with a half-compunctious laugh, when all had been done that could be done; 'you certainly have a most amazing faculty for taking burdens off other people's shoulders and making rough places smooth and looking as if you liked it all the time. I suppose the fact is that you do like it. It's a dangerous reputation to have acquired, though. You may depend upon it that if ever I find myself in a hole, I shall come straight to you.'

'I sincerely hope you will,' Matthew answered. 'But at the same time I hope you will try to keep out of holes.'

He knew that his friend was not too well off, and, careless though he himself was about money matters, he could not help seeing that the household in Hans Place was not being managed upon economical principles. Lilian, too, had let fall some casual remarks which had led him to fear that there might be trouble in store for her and her husband. For the rest, he did not suspect the existence of any breach between them, while the resentment which he had not unnaturally harboured against his former love had become greatly softened both by compassion for her in her sorrow and by her behaviour to him, which had reverted very nearly to what it had been in her childish days.

'Mamma would be pleased if she knew how kind you have been to me,' was her parting speech. 'I don't think I could ever have got through these dreadful days without you; and now that you are going, I feel as if—as if there was nobody!'

'Is Leonard nobody?' asked Matthew, with a smile.

'Leonard hardly knew my mother and never cared for her; there was no reason why he should. She was nothing to him, except an old lady, who was in bad health and who could not be expected to live long. Perhaps she would have been nothing more than a rather interesting patient to you, if you were like other people; but then you are like nobody else. I often wish that you were different in some ways.'

'In what ways?' inquired Matthew, who had no idea of her meaning.

'I shall only seem impertinent if I tell you; but—isn't it rather a pity *never* to think of yourself? You lose all sorts of

things that you might have and you don't seem to mind. Yet you *must* mind ; and not one person in a hundred realises that pure unselfishness is at the bottom of it all.' She paused for a moment before adding abruptly : ' Why should you let Sir William Baxendale push you aside ? It doesn't follow that you do other people a service every time that you efface yourself.'

She turned away, without allowing him time to make any rejoinder, and as he got into his hansom it occurred to him that her words admitted of more than one interpretation. The allusion to Miss Frere was an old story ; he was scarcely disconcerted by it ; but could she mean that he had rendered her no service when he had retired in Leonard Jerome's favour ? If she did, there might be worse troubles awaiting her than those pecuniary ones which he foresaw.

*(To be continued.)*

# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A FATAL RESERVATION. By R. O. PROWSE ... ..	225
BOOK II. CHAPTERS I.—III.	
CHARACTER NOTE: THE FRENCHMAN ... ..	251
GLEAMS OF MEMORY; WITH SOME REFLECTIONS. By JAMES PAYN ... ..	255
CHAPTER III.	
THE SHADOW ON THE BLIND ... ..	281
CLICHÉS AND TAGS ... ..	301
MATTHEW AUSTIN. By W. E. NORRIS ... ..	305
CHAPTER XXXIII.— <i>Retirement.</i>	
" XXXIV.— <i>Lilian as a Hostess.</i>	
" XXXV.— <i>Leonard pays his Friend a Compliment.</i>	
" XXXVI.— <i>A Change of Quarters.</i>	

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